

# **The Power of Feedback in Professional Learning**

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I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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*Susan Rodman.*

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## **Reflective Statement**

### ***Overview***

This reflective statement builds on an earlier opportunity to formally reflect on my learning, contained in my Ed D Portfolio submission. My learning path through the three components of the Ed.D programme - the taught modules (Foundations of Professionalism, Methods of Enquiry I and II, and Reading Recovery Trainer Training Specialist Module), and the two independent research elements (Institution Focussed Study and the Thesis)- has mapped and reshaped a major shift in personal and professional identity in partnership, as the three programme components were not just cumulative but were interlinked in a more complex way. This statement provides a reflective account of self-rediscovery through academic study and reflective practice. My academic and research learning endeavours throughout the Doctorate in Education (Ed.D) are explored as a metaphorical journey. I consider how Ed.D study and my evolving professional role in Reading Recovery (RR) interacted to support my learning. I also consider how the timing and sequence of learning experiences may have impacted on my journeying.

### **The need for a personal and professional map – the four taught modules**

After working in Reading Recovery as teacher, then Teacher Leader for some years, I took up the opportunity to train as a RR university trainer<sup>1</sup>. Without doubt, the academic study required was the most daunting aspect of the change in professional role. Had it not been required as part of the role, I would never have

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<sup>1</sup> The roles in Reading Recovery involve teachers implementing the early intervention of Reading Recovery in schools, Teacher Leaders training teachers in local, LA based training sites, and university Trainers training the Teacher Leaders at the only Teacher Leader and Trainer training site in Europe, at the Institute of Education, University of London.

undertaken such a course of study. On the first morning of the first taught module, a tutor asked us to reflect with colleagues on why we had enrolled. For me the answer was clear. I had to, in order to access the professional role I wanted. I consider that this ambiguity of purpose was the cause of my initial 'destabilisation' and 'disorientation' (Atherton, 1999).

The taught modules began with Foundations of Professionalism (FoP) and the specialist module, Reading Recovery Trainer training. The FoP readings surrounding professionalism, professionalism and professionalisation were from a discipline I had not experienced before. I found them hard to read with any degree of criticality in order to engage with the authors' argument. This feeling of being 'deskilled' was personally understood as feeling lost, without direction. This was added to by my initial experiences of the Trainer training experience. The field experience of observing the Teacher Leader training group in a range of settings required me to observe silently, noting learning content and sequences, recording responses and raising personal questions. I also found this difficult, as I didn't know what to look for and how to raise my level of critical thinking to interact with my observations of the learning taking place.

Writing critically was another potential crisis of confidence. I found writing an argument difficult, and initially I found myself merely demonstrating all I had read, rather than creating clear criteria for whether a piece of literature was helpful in my chosen theme. Feedback from the module tutor clearly directed me to attend to clarity and argument construction.

I found my way ahead in creating collaborative networks, with colleagues in Reading Recovery and on the Ed.D course. Discussion and joint reflection became a way of mapping things to attend to and increasing my personal

repertoire of strategies for cycles of writing and reflecting. Focused conversations allowed me to reflect on my learning, to understand my own learning processes, recognise my resistance and the barriers I created to taking on new ideas and thus allow me to become more autonomous in recognising ways to 'reorient' myself. In particular, the processes and seminar discourses of the Institution Focused Study and the Thesis components of the Ed.D programme provided these opportunities.

I continue by reflecting on the distinct contribution that each of the experiences have made up to the point of thesis submission, focussing on the metaphorical learning journeys of 'Surface to Deep' and 'Periphery to Centre'.

### ***Reflection - Surface to Deep***

Reflection may mean different things to different people. In its simplest sense it involves reviewing or reconsidering an aspect of something that has occurred. The opportunities during the experience of learning in a professional doctorate have augmented my understanding of the term and of the potential power of such activity. Without environments that provide prolonged and sustained opportunities to reflect, reflection can involve a degree of self-deception. There is no reason to act on the results of reflection and so the product of the opportunity never becomes tested. Without some form of action following reflection, the activity to me seems somewhat pointless. My learning has offered opportunities for critical reflection on underlying assumptions to occur. Rather than stopping at reflection on 'why', I have had to dig even deeper to consider "how can I better understand the 'why'?" and "What can I do about the 'why'?" It involves reflecting on actions, knowledge, practices and experiences and I have come to

understand it as aligned with a process of transformation. It is easy to continue to maintain a degree of ‘disconnectedness’ with something one is not very good at. You can say to yourself “it’s not for people like me. If only they provided better support, or did X, Y and Z, I would be better at it.” I consider I did this initially with academic study at this level. I could easily identify and reflect on my difficulties with reading and writing critically, but what was challenging was to move to the questions of “what am I doing to make it hard? How can I change what I do in line with this insight?” One of the key things that occurred as part of the process of my learning was a move to use feedback. Feedback, which may occur in written or oral form, and from peers or teachers, gives the opportunity to reflect on several things at once; the performance in the form of the learning product, the view of performance others take, the route to that performance and the underlying assumption one has that affected the learning route. Action following feedback need not be at the level of ‘fixing it up’. In other words, *“reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions. Reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid”* (Mezirow, 1991, p.6). The teaching style in the FoP was influential in how I came to understand reflection. I found it challenging initially, but the dialogic style of teaching employed in the module allowed me to engage in overlapping cycles of experience, reflection, change, and development. Further reflection on the developments achieved has acted as intrinsic motivation to further effort. If the learning product is understood as oneself, there are clear rewards for continued effort.

### ***Periphery to centre***

Learning as part of the Ed.D has been a social process. I view myself as having been prepared for the practices of a community (Moll, 1990). I understand the process of preparation not as a passive process but as active appropriation of cultural knowledge, language and behaviours. Learning has been purposefully directed toward the goal of full and active participation in the research culture, providing *“a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice”* (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). As an individual learner, I have been able to build and construct meanings initially from observation of and then from participation alongside observation of the community. To exemplify this, I use the example of the specialist module, Reading Recovery Trainer training. I referred earlier to my lack of understanding of observation as a learning tool. Reflection on this phase demonstrates that it was an essential part of moving from one professional designation to another. I did not understand that the purpose of observation was *“not to learn from talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation”* (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 108-9). What is notable is that despite learning remaining within a previously well-known community, the move from peripheral to central participation was essential for key processes of ‘enculturation’ to occur. Within the same community, professional designations differ in ways of being, knowing and acting, and opportunities to reflect on rationales, goals and purposes have allowed learning to take place. A key factor

in my view of a personal learning route is activity and how it is related to its surroundings (Vygotsky, 1968). Learning is mediated first on an '*inter-psychological*' level (between the learner, other learners and an instructor) and then incorporated into an '*intra-psychological*' level (individually and internally) (Vygotsky, 1978). My learning within this social framework benefited from the effects of collaboration (Rogoff et al., 1996), and moved toward assuming joint responsibility for the construction of knowledge. This view of activity as learning was supported by my experiences in Methods of Enquiry I and II. The modules did two key things. Firstly, the activities of thinking critically about planning a piece of research and the associated socio-political considerations were separated. This allowed another step within the move towards more central participation in research. At each stopping point, a space for reflection is engineered. This allows reflections on learning to be incorporated into the learning process itself and in this way 'powers' the learning into the next phase. Secondly, both modules allowed participation to be guided by working with an 'expert other' in the form of a tutor-researcher. This allowed further access to ways of knowing and thinking whilst delaying the point of independent participation. Reflecting on the examples, learning has not been understood as the acquisition of knowledge by individuals, but as a process of social participation. The nature of that participation impacts significantly on the process, as experiences surrounding the Institution-focused study demonstrated. The opportunities to apply the range of experiences from the taught modules to one's own setting was key in thinking about knowledge as relationships with people and contexts, rather than something that is contained solely within the head. This idea stimulated my IFS focus on Trainer talk as a model of decision-making and I have seen the particular focus

and processes of this component as key to my professional practice, viewing Teacher Leader preparation not as a collection of knowledge and facts, but preparation for full and active participation in a community of practice. The fascinations and success of this learning experience gave rise to the focus of my research during the thesis stage; the role of feedback in my own professional learning context.

My learning across the modules, research apprenticeships and wider experiences in the fieldwork opportunities of the specialist course have yielded benefits for my emerging role of leadership in Reading Recovery across the UK and Ireland. It is here that I make sense of my study, testing my new insights and understandings. My experiences of self-rediscovery and reflection on learning have provided a positive foundation for my responsibilities for fostering enjoyment of and enthusiasm for research as a learning context for teachers and teacher educators.

### *The road ahead.....*

The professional doctorate is, using the metaphor of my reflections, in some ways a gateway for a novice researcher. It represents the road to new ideas, new involvements and new relationships. For me, this represents a stronger and more resilient way of working for the goal of my professional enterprise - that more children who have failed to learn to read by 6 years of age should have access to early literacy intervention in the form of Reading Recovery. My learning journey has not involved learning more about Reading Recovery exclusively, but has involved changing my 'epistemological glasses', through the different modules and programme components, in order to look at my own activity. Each aspect has



contributed to thinking about communicating, theorising, researching and conceptualising more effectively. I look forward to the opportunity to bring the gateways of my own learning to a wider audience.

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## **Abstract**

*This longitudinal study explores the power and potential of feedback for expert professional learners. Feedback designed for professional learners has complex goals, including higher cognition, greater independence, increased perception within the field of activity and increased levels of reflection, both on and in action. Feedback definitions, which focus on improvement of product outcome, need to reflect the constructivist nature of giving and receiving information about learning. Feedback, as linked to assessment and evaluation practices, has roles for both teacher and learner. If feedback is to be optimally effective, its interaction with learner, learning environment, curriculum and teacher need to become understood through experience by learners in that context.*

*The context of this study is a fulltime Master's programme for teacher educators at the Institute of Education, University of London. The findings, using data from interviews, course documents, field notes and written examples of feedback, demonstrate that feedback as a concept is somewhat uniquely constructed. This construction has the potential to either assist, or impede, or leave undisturbed the learning intentions of the feedback being understood and acted upon by the learner.*

*Feedback can assist the process of perspective transformation. As learners learn, they are transformed, if feedback acts as catalyst to learning for knowledge construction, learning about the construction process itself and associated values in a given context. Therefore, feedback when perceived as a curriculum within a curriculum can provide a powerful means by which the goal of transformation is achieved. Feedback, as a socially situated practice, can operate as catalyst, process, product and curriculum when adopted in higher professional learning. The learning process, as knowledge and action, moves from the interpersonal to the intra-personal, with the feedback curriculum acting to enhance self-assessment and self-directed learning, as learners actively seek and interpret feedback from the learning contexts which they lead.*

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## **Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis**

### *Focus of the study*

Assessment, as the sum of student and teacher activities to gather information about learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998), has the potential to be one of the key drivers of teaching and learning processes. It may take summative or formative forms. When assessment is summative it acts as a judgement about learning as related to other learners, and is generally scored or graded in some way. When assessment acts formatively it provides opportunities for information that can be used for beneficial changes in teaching and learning. In many instructional environments, assessment is used in both summative and formative forms, sometimes in combination and sometimes separately. The one aspect they both have in common is feedback. Learners can use feedback to learn whether the teacher's intentions are summative or formative in nature. Feedback can be accessed from more learning situations than planned assessment alone. Feedback opportunities, planned or unplanned, summative or formative, may give rise to different sorts of information with different learning uses.

Feedback occurs in many aspects of our lives. We commonly use the word to describe many activities, effects and reactions. We could be referring to planned feedback, where others return opinions aimed to either reinforce current state of affairs or to encourage some change, implicitly for the better. This can occur in social contexts, business contexts and educationally focussed contexts. We might also be referring to feedback we did not seek, like a look or unguarded comment that provides us with a view of how someone else reacts to an aspect of our action or appearance. However, this thesis is concerned with feedback in a specific context; one where feedback is used as a deliberate process for learning in professional development environments; one where feedback aims to provide

learners with opportunities for reflection, self-assessment and continued improvement (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lieberman & Miller, 1999); one where both summative and formative assessment practices are used.

In this chapter I provide a background for my interest in the research focus on feedback and rationales for its importance and potential for my professional role. I end the chapter with an overview of the contents of the thesis, a rationale for order of presentation and how they together form my argument and conclusions.

### *The Experience of Feedback*

I watched a friend fill in a response sheet after receiving written feedback as a result of submitting some pieces of work for assessment as part of a higher education course for teachers. It seemed to me that the questions posed were searching for some information about awareness of oneself as a learner, personal strengths and weaknesses and asking for reflection on the assessment process. Yet the task of responding to what seemed to me very worthwhile questions was being completed with some degree of sarcasm and amusement. As a university teacher with shared responsibility for constructing a multi-levelled learning environment for professional learners, I was immediately interested in the process she was undertaking. This feedback process initiated by assessment was not unlike ones initiated in my own context. We began to talk about what the response sheet was for and how it contributed to the learning cycle in which she was engaged. She had submitted her first academic assignment as part of assessment process for a Master's qualification and had recently received postal written feedback, which included a grade for her work. Enclosed in the envelope along with her written feedback was a response sheet that she had not known she

would receive. The response sheet required her to identify and reflect on particular aspects of the writing experience itself, and the feedback she had received, that were useful to her. It also asked her to identify some personal strengths and weaknesses and develop these into targets. One would think that her many years of experience as a primary school teacher had provided an understanding of feedback as a means to improve performance, a way of assisting someone else to learn. This was not how she was viewing the opportunity to feed back to her tutors how useful she was finding their comments. “No one will look at it. It’s just more paper to satisfy someone’s existence,” she said. “It just makes them (her academic tutors) feel better about saying negative stuff to you, I got lots of ‘*could do betters*’”.

Her final comments seemed to arise from her difficulty in returning to a learner’s position and beginning to reflect on her own learning. It seemed that far from underpinning a positive view of feedback as part of assessment for learning, in this instance, her professional experience was contributing to an understanding of feedback that didn’t perceive communicating about her role as learner being useful to her academic tutors. Feedback, collaborative review and reflection on performance and progress are integral to assessment for learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002), yet understandings of feedback operating in classrooms for children do not transfer well to understanding how the adult professional benefits from similar processes. We, as teachers, may assume that providing high quality feedback on learning activity leads to raising the standard of the academic activity (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and is in some way representative of both learner cognition and insights from a more skilled tutor (Brown & Knight, 1995, p.112). However, the real life example described above demonstrates that the quality of



the feedback document itself, the use of clear strategies for sharing learning goals and dialogue leading to expectations of self-assessment, may not ensure that the range of opportunities afforded by a formative assessment process are realised (Black, 1993; Black & Wiliam, 1998). There may be more complex interactions and reactions occurring when the learning context involves both higher cognition and situated professional learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This experience caused me to reflect on the opportunities provided by feedback in a professional learning environment and to consider aspects that are particular to professional learners who are ‘already-expert’<sup>2</sup>. Professional knowledge and prior experience would enable effective problem solving in their field, and therefore expert learners would have different needs to novice learners (Sabers et al., 1991). Strategies to develop reflection on action and learning, and communicating learning goals, may also need to function in different ways than for novice learners. From the perspective of the experienced teacher as learner, considerable pedagogical knowledge will assist creative thinking and problem solving based on practical experiences. Constructing effective assessment for learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002) and feedback information would also be part of the prior knowledge and experience of teachers undergoing higher professional learning. This does not however assume that they have the knowledge and skills to be able to reflect on that knowledge or to teach that professional knowledge to others. It also does not assume an awareness of how to continue to learn effectively. Assessment processes leading to feedback

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<sup>2</sup> I use this term to refer to professionals who have considerable knowledge and experience in their field. This professional knowledge it is assumed will be composed of knowledge as facts and knowledge as experience, and how this knowledge might be mediated by context (Scarmadalia & Bereiter, 1999). This will be developed in Chapter Two.

opportunities may need to function somewhat uniquely for 'already-expert' professional learners.

The research interest developed into a focus on the nature of feedback and what it may need to accomplish for both learner and tutor. Assessment leading to feedback in professional learning contexts, as in all assessment intended as information for further learning, will need to provide not only assessment product as information, but also maintain (and possibly increase) sources of motivation, inspiration and promote further critical reflection. However, unless feedback is accessible in, language, meaning and intent for the intended recipient, it may not achieve its potential and some learning goals may remain unrealised. Whilst the ways in which feedback practices ensure that the assessment opportunities result in communication of shared goals learning would seem to have some commonality with Assessment for Learning principles (Black et al., 2003), professional learners may have different expectations of assessment procedures, particularly feedback. Feedback only contributes to learning if the learner is able to and wants to, use the information for future learning. More particularly, teachers engaged in professional learning will have themselves been creating feedback information for pupils, although these experiences may not translate to percept of themselves as learners reflecting on previously held professional knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. I am identifying the possibility of particular learning contexts producing complex interactions between previous learner roles, prior knowledge, levels and sources of motivation and new learning. This may impact on how assessment practices in general and feedback in particular facilitate further learning. This points to a need for further exploration of what

feedback might contribute to learning involving a change of professional designation. Therefore, the over-arching question I pose is

*What is the role of feedback in complex professional learning?*

### ***Researcher context***

My own context influences my particular interest in feedback for professionals preparing to manage teacher-change at both practice, praxis and attitudinal levels, and so providing a model for thinking and doing by creating an enquiry-based and community-centred learning environment (Moore, 1997). Feedback in this and similar contexts is a potentially seminal element since it forms part of personal experience within a course and is an element of the teacher-learning context, which the teacher educator will construct for others in the future. I am part of a small team of university teachers based at ULIE<sup>3</sup> who provide Master's accredited courses for teacher educators. These teacher educators will go on to equip teachers to deliver high quality literacy early intervention programmes to children in schools. Since individually delivered early literacy intervention is not part of routine provision in schools, advocacy at the level of local authority and school is a key role for these teacher educators. Advocacy for an early intervention system, involving problem solving at a child, teacher and school level, and managing the implementation of early intervention, is underpinned by a sound theoretical understanding of early literacy acquisition and literacy difficulties. This integration of professional, substantive and cultural knowledge

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<sup>3</sup> Institute of Education, University of London

allows pre-emptive response to policy that may threaten local implementation and sustainability of funding.

Learning in this professional context is understood as a dual process, which involves complex interplay between old and new learning (Clariana et al., 2000). In this way, knowledge is individually constructed and socially mediated, as it is also constructed on experience that involves the learning of others. This type of learning context assumes a particular view of the nature of knowledge where *“Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action”* (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Planned learning experiences seek to draw out and use experience, both prior and current, as a means of engaging with the critical reflection and processes of teaching tasks to support internalization of decision-making (Vygotsky, 1978). A shared goal of commitment to effective early literacy intervention brings a common focus and incentive to work together (Newman et al., 1989) and high levels of dialogue, interaction, and collaboration (Rogoff et al., 1996) are crucial to learning in this setting. Learning is an intrinsically social process (Vygotsky, 1968), in which learners are ‘enculturated’, or prepared for the practices of a community (Moll, 1990). A socio-cultural interpretation sees ‘enculturation’ as an active process wherein the cultural knowledge, language and behaviours are learned with the goal of full and active participation within a culture or community. The individual builds, or constructs meanings from participation in and observation of the culture or community, and benefits from the effects of collaboration (Rogoff et al., 1996). Social interaction also plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition and determines the frontiers of potential, where cognitive change is

triggered first socially then internally (Vygotsky, 1978) through many cycles. Therefore, a group of learners can learn from problem solving and discussion in ways (and at levels) not possible when working alone (Newman et al., 1989). Critical examination of the nature of learning that is stimulated by the giving and receiving of feedback is useful in the professional learning context of already-expert teachers as it is presently under-theorised and may be frequently undervalued by learners in higher education. This thesis adds to existing knowledge of the ways that feedback is used to advance higher professional learning. Therefore, the research focus on understanding the complex role of feedback has potential for developments in both my own work and the international higher education community more generally and presents possibilities for publication of findings. The next section gives a brief overview of the chapter contents and how each chapter contributes to the thesis goals.

### *Sculpting Feedback*

The thesis sets out to explore the role of feedback in a professional learning environment. This involves exploring issues of definition, assessment and personal meaning making. I draw on socio-cultural perspectives (Cole, 1996; Werstch, 1981) to critically examine one aspect of a professional learning environment. This perspective guides the exploration of how feedback practices are experienced, used for further learning and learned for future use, within the culture of a systemic early literacy intervention programme.

The chapters represent a growth in personal understanding of what feedback is, its role in professional learning and its potential for cognitive change and personal development. The chapters also build towards the presentation of a complex role

for feedback constructed for the already-expert professional, used to inform future learning and intensify personal learning resources. In this chapter I have briefly described my interest in feedback and its potential value to others involved in professional learning.

In the next chapter, I examine definitions of feedback and evaluate how they may be useful for this study. The chapter functions as an important aspect of theorising grounded in data used in this study. I use the literature to develop theoretical definitions with which to look at and contrast the data. I also use the literature to assist the process of making a known environment novel, thereby increasing potential for new insights during the analytic process. I initially conceptualise feedback as a socially constructed pedagogic process, which has potential for empowering the learner and impacting on the rate of learning. I argue that definitions of feedback within professional learning need to reflect the complexity of purpose of feedback in that environment.

Chapter Three sets out the research decisions regarding design and methods. A longitudinal case study, using interviews, course documents, field notes and written feedback examples, is presented as a profitable design and methods through which to explore the potential of feedback in a complex professional learning environment. I argue for the fundamental role of meaning making in the way the data is collected and analysed, and the potential analytic processes. The chapter also identifies a profitable study context for the exploration of feedback, namely a full time Master's course at a university, which provides professional preparation for teacher-educators.

The role of researcher in a research process that involves participant observation and an emphasis on social and personal meaning making brings both benefit and

risk. These possibilities are discussed in Chapter Four. Issues of researcher bias and power relationships are examined within the general concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity.

I continue by presenting the evidence for feedback being conceptualised as a pedagogic process for learning, which becomes appropriated by learners in this setting. Chapter Five draws on data from interviews with both current and previous course participants to ground the emerging theory in this study context. The chapter also identifies curriculum components that may demonstrate feedback functioning as a curriculum, which powers learning and empowers the learner.

The story of the developing concept of feedback from the learner's perspective is told in Chapter Six. The chapter's focus on the course participants results in a story of feedback and perceptions of its role in learning, which encompasses both cognitive and affective aspects of feedback.

Chapter Seven considers feedback as possessing transformative potential, changing the perspective of the learner. This conclusion draws on the idea of emotions and cognition intertwined with an ultimate outcome of changed conceptual and socio-political understanding.

Chapter Eight makes the case for feedback as the vehicle through which enhanced triple loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978) is achieved. The chapter argues for the fundamental role of co-constructive feedback and equates it to a curriculum in higher professional learning that prepares professionals to give feedback to other professionals. Internal feedback mechanisms are presented as essential elements of future learning and development in a climate of educational change.

Professional learning should seek to locate opportunities for reflection, self-assessment and continued improvement (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Whilst feedback has potential to realise these aspects of effective learning, the current definitions (and experienced practical realities) are problematic to constructivist views of learning wherein the social practice that might be suggested by the term 'feedback' seeks to communicate with past performance, but mainly with future possibilities. This thesis explores feedback in a professional learning context in order to achieve optimum efficacy for both learner and teacher.



## **Chapter Two: What is Feedback?**

## *Introduction*

It is generally accepted that providing high quality feedback to student activity as part of assessment for learning raises standards and enhances achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This clearly applies to learning following assessment and feedback for both children and adults. However, form and practice of feedback itself are considered to be socially complex in its uses and effects and therefore an under-researched area (Mutch, 2003). Whilst the word 'feedback' is widely used to describe the correction and critique of learning activity, the conceptual understandings informing what happens when a learning activity is extended to provide some sort of comment or evaluation to the learner are not well determined (Elshout-Mohr, 1994). Some further consideration of how we think about feedback, what we understand by the term, and how it is theorised, is needed before embarking on evaluating the term in professional learning contexts. Critiquing existing literature and developing a view of feedback for professional learning is vital to this thesis, for three main reasons. Firstly, modelling theoretical representations of feedback from the literature will underpin how the social and cultural practice of encouraging and evaluating students in a professional learning environment will be explored in this thesis. Secondly, there is a need for author and reader to have some shared understandings of feedback, to acknowledge assumptions about what feedback is and what it is not in this thesis context, prior to shaping enquiry, analysing, and considering data. Thirdly, literature forms part of the data in grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It can be used not only to stimulate further focusing of research enquiry, but also as an analytic tool within those cycles.

This chapter reviews and critiques existing definitions and possible applications of feedback and identifies ways in which understandings of feedback might be further defined and explored in the particular context of complex learning for experienced professionals. I argue that a concept of feedback needs to be able to support inferences from complex interactions of learner, instructor and curriculum in order to explicate how feedback may inform learning specifically for already-expert professionals.

In the opening section of the chapter, I consider various definitions of feedback arising from different conceptualisations of learning and their potential role, focusing particularly on what it might mean for exploring professional learning. Subsequently, I identify relevance for this thesis, leading to formulation of the research questions.

### *Feedback for Learning*

In perhaps its most fundamental and day-to-day meaning, the word ‘feedback’ is the information about something we have done and how well we have done. In other words, feedback is most commonly conceptualised as a response about the result of a process or activity. The word in its most literal sense does not infer the presence of information about the sequence of learning events and how that sequence may have contributed to the overall results. It also might not mean a judgement about the results and how they compare with what was aimed for or desired. However, when we speak of feedback and its relation to learning in higher education, we may wish to communicate something more sophisticated. I would argue we want to refer to a system through which we provide a variety of

information to learners that is intended to influence how the task would be approached if it were to be attempted again or to be extended in similar circumstances. However, the intended recipients of feedback for learning may not understand this intended meaning. An altogether different personal meaning may influence how feedback information is received and used for learning. There are many implied and received meanings to the general term 'feedback', as I now go on to discuss.

### *Feeding back*

Feedback, it is suggested, has two fundamental components; one that simply verifies, and one that elaborates (Kulhavy & Stock, 1989). Evidently, elaboration is more effective than verification alone in developing learning (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991; Pridemore & Klein, 1995). Developing the idea, feedback could be thought of as *"a source of information necessary for verification, elaboration, concept development, and meta-cognitive adaptation"* (Narciss, 1999, p. 3). If we accept this viewpoint, effective feedback might be conceptualised as diagnostic, prescriptive and appropriate to the students' level of learning (Guskey, 2001). If receiving feedback does not of itself ensure that intended learning outcomes will follow, questions relating to the emotional and motivational engagement of the learner are paramount. However, amongst criticisms of any simple interpretations of the term would have to be the question of whether the feedback framework has adequately considered the role of individual motivation. Indeed, the motivation for engaging in learning which affects personal change when one is already successful in a given field may be an important aspect of effective feedback for already-expert professional learners and deserves further consideration.

### *Motivation*

Motivation accounts for engagement in any activity, whether or not it results in learning. It determines how much effort one is willing to put into an activity and how long one is prepared to persevere if it becomes challenging (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992, cited in Garris et al., 2002; Wolters, 1998). Therefore, this would suggest that feedback could be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated<sup>4</sup>, since “*an activity is extrinsically motivated if engaging in the activity leads to some external reward such as food, money, or social reinforcement*” (Malone, 1980, p.3). Motivation may also be stimulated by internal affective characteristics, not always apparent to other people (Malone, 1980). Positive stimulation promoting perseverance may be due to a feeling of enjoyment that the activity produces (Reeve, 1992), or to some other feelings, which are harder to discern. It could be said that feedback, by involving learners in their own successes, may produce feelings of engagement and enjoyment that increase likely perseverance in improving learning outcomes for far longer than with no feedback (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Research on the nature of intrinsically motivating activities, for example games, allow a description of this state or, ‘flow’, as a psychological state resulting from high levels of involvement and concentration. Flow must involve two aspects: the conditions for high levels of involvement and the effects of high involvement (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). This may suggest that past experiences involving pleasurable motivation will relate to both past experiences with the task and to experiences with the task and associated feedback. Feedback is likely to be one of the necessary prerequisites for ‘flow’ to act as a motivating factor on the learner, supporting my point that

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<sup>4</sup> Extrinsic – motivation from an external source, often in the form of a reward  
 Intrinsic – motivational elements generated by the individual

experienced feedback for already-expert learners may need to include an affective function in addition to a cognitive function, particularly with regard to motivation. This point may be pertinent when considering feedback for already-expert professionals, and therefore for this study.

Feedback may also incorporate shaping responses (Kulhavy & Stock 1989; Mory, 1992), containing information about performance as an element to shape future behaviour, changing cognitive behaviour as well as social behaviour.

Experienced professionals need information about their cognition and their performance, which may as yet not correspond. Feedback, giving information to improve performance, can act as motivational to future effort. It may have other planned or unplanned functions in how learning is approached in the future. The next section considers this in more detail, as I argue that feedback referring to professional learning in higher education learning environments needs to reflect the complex interaction of learner, curriculum<sup>5</sup> and instructor/facilitator.

### *The tools of feedback*

Tools enable people to act on environments and surroundings, both physical and psychological. Tools when applied to learning, "*do not tell you what to know; they show you how to know it*" (Polin, 1992, p. 6). Calling feedback a process using tools would imply a particular definition of the nature of knowledge and of learning. It could imply that feedback for learning is both individually conceptualised and understood. A teacher's role may be not only to observe and assess but to also engage with the learner while they are completing activities, wondering aloud and posing questions to learners for promotion of reasoning

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<sup>5</sup> Curriculum is used here to define the means of realising purpose and articulating aspiration, integrating the roles of action as practice and reflection on that practice (Grundy, 1987). Curriculum is therefore a way of planning activity and communicating purpose.

(DeVries et al., 2002). This viewpoint aligns with the work of the Assessment Reform Group (2002) and implies constructivist notions of teaching and learning. The aim of such learning and teaching experiences is to provide tools with which learners formulate and test their ideas, draw conclusions and inferences, and pool and convey their knowledge in a collaborative learning environment. Arguing for this interpretation transforms portrayal of a feedback instance from passive receiving of information to negotiation as part of the learning process.

Wells (1999) description of intellectual tools is helpful here. Tools are available to be utilised by leader of the learning and learner alongside existing knowledge constructs to create new knowledge and remodel existing knowledge. Feedback is given a greater complexity as Wells describes an entity that is both social and situational, therefore constructivist in nature. As part of this interpretation, we can think of both concepts and knowledge being shaped through feedback and the learner actively applying and experimenting with concepts of both task and contribution of feedback to a learning experience. However, one aspect of feedback that is not discussed by Wells (1991) is that feedback forms are multifarious, and it is not clear whether all of these forms function as constructivist. For example, feedback consisting solely of a judgment in the form of a grade may impact future performance, motivation and confidence in particular. Such feedback instances clearly do not function as constructivist. This idea may be important when considering how feedback is utilised by an already-expert professional and how one might explore feedback across a professional post-graduate course, for example, with many types of academic and fieldwork activity.

Tools for teaching, or pedagogic strategies, may have a local and immediate utility. These might include classroom or instructional practices, strategies, and other resources that guide an array of decisions. Principles, frameworks or schemas are also used to guide decision-making, but as broader conceptions. These may be thought of as conceptual tools and may include theories such as constructivism, which guide pedagogic actions. These theoretical principles and concepts, including instructional scaffolding, can serve as guidelines for instructional practice across the different strands of the curriculum. They are also used to guide decision-making about teaching and learning but at a deeper more reflective level. Tools are ideally understood conceptually as they guide effective decision-making. However, the move from surface understanding in the form of pedagogic tools, to conceptual, deep understanding of decision-making processes as described, would seem to align with the incremental adoption process called *appropriation* (Newman et al., 1989; Wertsch, 1991). The use of conceptual and pedagogical tools may be learned through personal experience. This concept may be helpful to understanding how feedback processes could contribute to learning in a complex learning environment for teachers and teacher educators.

### *Appropriation*

Appropriation refers to the process through which the learner adopts the conceptual and pedagogical tools available for use in particular social contexts. Through this process a learner internalises ways of thinking associated with specific cultural or community-based practices. The extent of appropriation may depend on the alignment of the learner's values, beliefs, prior experiences and goals, with members of the culture or community who provide the model of these



conceptual and pedagogic tools (Newman et al., 1989; Grossman et al., 1995; Wertsch, 1991). This would appear to have relevance for this study, since teachers in any context are responsible for providing feedback of a planned nature to the learners. Learners may only go on to use conceptual and pedagogical tools as part of feedback processes in culturally-bound ways e.g. in their teaching of adults, if they perceive their own experiences to have been helpful. Cazden's (1988) idea of '*performance before competence*' is also relevant here because it emphasizes the role of active participation as a means of becoming competent in social practices. This would suggest that to only receive feedback in a transmission-oriented way would have weaker potential for enabling first pedagogical and then conceptual appropriation of feedback processes than participation in joint activity (Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995).

However, as I have argued above, whilst the word 'feedback' might be used to describe the constructive and co-constructive critique of learners' work and activity, it still might imply that it deals with past action alone. This is problematic to constructivist views of learning, where the social practice that appears to be understood by the term 'feedback' seeks to also 'feed-forward' to higher cognition and improved learning outcomes. Thus, the term 'feedback' would seem to be "*a broader concept. It means any reciprocal flow of influence*" (Senge, 1990, p.79). The idea of reciprocal movement is an important one, particularly within the concept of feedback as 'loops'. I consider existence and functions of feedback loops in the next section.

### *Feedback loops*

A further stance on feedback, influenced by communication theory refers to movement of information back to its origin (Roos & Hamilton, 2004), in this case a human learner. This is often characterised as a feedback loop. Performance and assessment form a continuous cycle of learning steps becoming what might be referred to as a focused system of feedback loops. This seems related to loops of learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The model makes a distinction between the types of learning occurring as part of each loop. Single loop learning involves learning as new skills or knowledge.

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*Figure 1: Single loop learning*

For double loop learning to occur, a change in capacity is necessary, going beyond, but sometimes incorporating single-loop learning.

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**Reshaping thinking and behaviour**

*Figure 2: Double loop learning*

Learning is transformed by some change in the way that context is used to rethink a previous aspect of knowledge. The model implies that the learner is permanently changed at the point of triple loop learning.

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Learning is transformed

*Figure 3: Triple loop learning*

This idea would seem to have much in common with loops of feedback. Feedback loops may substantiate activity by attending both to the visible effects of prior feedback and the acting on that information, and to the further actions, which might represent both task and personal development. This suggests a circular and continuous causal process in which output (action or activity) is returned to its input source (the learner), possibly involving and incorporating other sources of information in the loop which can be used to source change and development. Despite the obvious context of mechanised and computerised processes of feedback loops, this theoretical standpoint would seem to have much to recommend it as a contribution to exploring the role of feedback in a complex professional environment.

Importantly, several aims for feedback are identified within a 'loop' system, promoting self-regulatory and self-directing learning. Given that we are considering higher cognition for experienced professionals, feedback could usefully influence not only the outcomes of learning instances, but also the

process and relative independence of the process. The idea of small learning instances powering large scale change seems very helpful in considering how often organising for learning for experienced professionals has to act as catalyst not only for change within an individual learner but for systemic change.

Feedback when described in this way is also linked further to the constructivist view. However, there are still problematic aspects since it lacks detail as to how the information gathered in these ‘feedback loops’ is used. Indeed, Sadler draws attention to this limitation when he refers to how information is left ‘dangling’ (Sadler, 1989, p. 121), as change is not inherent in the theory. Here feedback may be interpreted as regulatory and controlling in a learning process and as such does not fit well with a constructivist and co-constructive understanding of feedback under discussion here (Sadler, 1998). Perhaps related to this idea of loops, is the suggestion that feedback is received and acted upon in cycles (Kulhavy & Stock, 1989). In the first cycle, a demand in the form of a task is presented to the learner. The process of doing the task yields information, which may or may not be used by the learner to move forward in understanding of the task. In the second cycle, feedback is given and can be used to correct responses and misunderstandings. The third involves sees the original task demand being presented again as a test item, which is processed and responded to by the learner to produce a response which may be called learning (Mory, 1992, p. 7). Whilst the model does include the return of information to the original source, the learner, it does not deal with the possibility that feedback may have a role for the leader of the learning<sup>6</sup> in this environment. The next section discusses this point.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Leader of the learning’ has been used to avoid confusion with ‘teachers’, who will become learners in professional learning contexts.

### *Reciprocity*

Whatever the underlying concept of feedback, *“any theory that depicts learning as a process of mutual influence between learners and their environment must involve feedback implicitly or explicitly because, without feedback, mutual influence is, by definition, impossible”* (Bangert-Drowns, et al., 1991, p. 214).

Tensions between interpretations of the feedback concept led Sadler (1989) to redefine feedback in his seminal work on assessment forms. Significantly, he shifted the notion of feedback, *‘usually defined in terms of information about how successfully something has been or is being done’* (Sadler, 1989, p. 120) towards a focus on its effects. Feedback might be thought of as an effect on learning as opposed to its content. Relating that point to real life situations, we would appreciate that sometimes feedback may be too obscure or contextually or culturally coded for it to be of any use to re-shape action or process. The feedback content has not produced an effect for learning. The idea of a feedback instance as a ‘control loop’ (Sadler, 1989, p. 121) has enabled the move towards viewing the *‘indispensable conditions for improvement’*, including feedback having the ultimate goal of *‘monitor (ing) continuously the quality of what is being produced during the act of production itself’* (Sadler, 1989, p. 121). Does this draw the term ‘feedback’ into a focus on a triggered response? This would seem to be a simplistic interpretation considering Sadler’s suggestion that a constructivist reading might place emphasis on how feedback cultivates new understandings or increasingly critically reflective or theoretically based understandings of old knowledge (Sadler, 1998).

Also important in Sadler’s work, and related to the idea of feedback content and effect, is the suggestion that learners need several layers of knowledge in order to

utilise feedback for learning. The learner has to (a) understand the standards, goals or referents that the work or performance will be judged against, (b) balance the performance levels of desired attainment and actual performance, and (c) be able to decide on a course of action which will raise the standard of the actual performance closer to the required standard (Sadler, 1989, p. 121). The final point seems to suggest that the learner would require a deeper knowledge source to bring into play, unless the suggestion is that the feedback itself indicates the route that the learner should take. If the latter is the case, it suggests a simple transmission model where specific guidance about what constitutes effective performance is shared with learners so that responsibility for future action remains with the teacher. Is this view of feedback inclusive enough to characterise what would seem to be a complex interaction between the learner, the instructor/facilitator and the nature of the curriculum? This question seems particularly pertinent when considering the stated focus on feedback for already-expert professionals. Concepts of feedback for professional learning need to deal with how the particularised understandings inherent in each discipline or the culture of a particular course become first transparent and then embraced by the professional learner. To understand this fully, one would have to explore both feedback practices and how the learner in that context perceives them and uses them for future learning.

### *Effective Feedback for Learning*

The underlying concept of what is learning in general, and professional learning in particular, characterises our expectations of feedback. If we accept that learning requires at least “*the interaction of new information provided by*

*instruction with existing information already in the learner's memory*" (Clariana et al., 2000, p.5) then, as Narciss (1999) suggests, feedback's role in the learning cannot simply be one of transfer of information about what has been attained so far. Feedback will also need to provide information on the gap between where a learner is in their learning, and where they need to be. This raises the issue of feedback having a role in sharing criteria with learners in order to modify responses to the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black & Wiliam, 1998), linking to two key ideas. One, that assessment practices in general, and feedback in particular might seek to enable learners to learn more effectively; and two, that feedback may seek to make learners aware of how they learn. However, it does infer that there is a finite and agreed end point to which the learning aspires. In the case of complex professional learning, it may be that goal sharing is of a different nature than at the level of criteria.

Feedback may be considered effective if it enhances both capacities and motivation to learn – learning how to learn. For the purposes of this thesis, I affirm the approach of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme's view that learning to learn more effectively is not due to any single capacity and may be about development of several learning practices (TLRP, 2006). A practical understanding of the term may relate to reflecting on one's own performance and learning and purposefully applying the knowledge gained through that reflection<sup>7</sup> to further learning tasks. In addition to clear information about the task itself, it is clear that feedback instigating reflection will involve personalising learning information, though it is far from clear what it is that needs to be personalised for

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<sup>7</sup> I regard reflection as enabling a learner to assess, understand and learn through his or her own experiences. It is a personal process that usually results in some change in the learner's perspective of a situation or creates new learning for the individual.

already-expert learners. Reflection may involve, in addition to curriculum content and personal learning skill, issues of learning as situated within a culture.

Closely related to conscious reflection is the idea of metacognition, or thinking about your own thinking. This may have potential for considering the role of feedback in professional learning, as clearly metacognition could relate to self-regulating behaviours used for future learning. This point relates to learning for already-expert learners since one would expect much of any teaching action with professional learners to be concerned with monitoring, evaluating, and consciously manipulating how the learner uses knowledge, both substantive and professional. The combination of reflection and metacognition would seem particularly powerful in the context of professional learning since future learning may involve interaction of both affective and cognitive, and personal and social dimensions. This discussion points to the importance of exploring how leaders of the learning help already-expert learners get better at learning how to learn and extending previous knowledge.

#### *Feedback for already-expert learners*

Learning might also be characterised as the increasing development of expertise through participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), wherein knowledge and learning are progressively understood, acted upon and adjusted. This added dimension, or knowledge as practice, is helpful when considering already-expert professional learning as it considers the importance of ‘semiotic apprenticeship’<sup>8</sup> (Wells, 1999, p. 138). Feedback, if considered a cultural assessment product of evaluated participation, would need to include information to improve performance as

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<sup>8</sup> Wells (1999) talks of the importance of learning as incorporating attitudes, values and understanding of cultural artefacts as mastery of both procedural and substantive knowledge.



participation. It might function to gather information for decision-making around teaching and learning requiring both teacher and learner to engage in and feed into a circular and continuously causal practice. Feedback when viewed in this way, would have to have capacity for two effects; to learn about one's own learning in order to learn more effectively, and about how those insights are linked to the beliefs and value systems forming a given social and situational context.

To summarise the discussion so far, professional learners may have some personal perceptions of prior experiences and professional self-concept may result in problematic emotions whilst learning (Atherton, 1999). This suggests that prior experiences with feedback may strongly interact with feedback intention and create differing states and levels of anxiety in different learners (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). For some learners, levels of anxiety or negative emotion may make feedback less easily accessible for future learning, for learning how to learn and for appropriation of learning tools. Therefore, I use 'feedback' in this thesis to communicate a process, which has capacity to change both individuals and communities, involving a complex interaction of both affective and cognitive, and personal and social dimensions (Clariana et al., 2000).

It is clear feedback has the potential for a considerable impact on student achievement (Hattie, 1987, in Gibbs & Simpson 2002). A correlation study (Ramsden, 1992) indicated that students achieving highly answered positively when asked if teaching staff gave helpful feedback. However, this conclusion might not indicate that it was the quality of feedback alone that differed across the range of students, but that students who did well were somehow more able to make sense of, or interpret the feedback to improve their outcomes. Therefore,

the differing qualities, characteristics and impact of feedback would seem important to this exploration.

The next section identifies issues raised so far in this chapter that usefully contribute to exploration in the research context and questions the sorts of relationship between learning and feedback, which might be potentially interesting to investigate.

### *Explicating the feedback process*

It would seem from the discussion at the opening of this chapter that the nature of the learning task in focus and how, in what form, and when one feeds back to students may be key to the effectiveness of feedback. Indeed, feedback is an intrinsic part of assessment design. Exemplifying this point, meta-analysis of the instructional effects of feedback (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991) found that feedback covered a range of styles, and there were clear differences in feedback and assessment design for learners with different needs (Ames, 1992; Vispoel & Austin, 1995). Therefore, I argue that the way in which feedback is used is fundamental to the concept of the learner and learning, and therefore will differ from discipline to discipline, and across learning designations, levels of cognitive complexity or purposes of learning. Assessment design may reveal the concepts of learning and of feedback underpinning particular professional learning environments. A useful goal will be to explore the particular forms of feedback in the research context and to consider how those form part of the assessment system design particular to complex professional learning.

Conceptualising feedback as a process, the tools of which may be appropriated by learners, identifies the issue of relevance and perceived relevance of feedback

forms and content. If learning goals include feedback appropriation, first as a pedagogical and then as a conceptual decision-making tool (Cole, 1996; Newman et al., 1989; Grossman et al., 1995), feedback potential would be enhanced by attempting to align the values and beliefs of learner and teacher through feedback practices themselves. The feedback from the leader of the learning must be understood by the learner to be relevant to the person's career, mission, goals, objectives, or tasks. Exploring relevance in the context of the learning and the changing ways in which the feedback process is understood, used for learning, and conceptualised, would seem to have potential for uncovering the unique nature of feedback in a complex learning environment. It also suggests that in a constructivist learning environment there may be a changing awareness of the feedback process amongst the learners experiencing feedback. Taken to a logical conclusion, the learner, once skilled with particular tools, will have a deeper conceptual understanding of the feedback process than a novice in that field. The literature draws attention to the role of providing feedback that is current to the learner's thinking. Does a sizeable gap between activity and feedback point risk that the decisions made during the activity are a distant memory? It would seem that the quicker a desirable behaviour is reinforced, or valued, the more likely it will be repeated, is the view to be found in much of the literature (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). One could argue that this view of timeliness is merely reinforcement and therefore solely motivational, lacking the support needed for complex learning.

A constructivist view of feedback would seem to indicate importance for the way that feedback is used for supporting learning (Marshall et al., 1995). Most obviously and simply, feedback must fulfil an internal sense in learners of being

considered valued by the leader of the learning. However, feedback may also have a role to play in the way that learners appropriate concepts of learner and learning and possibly of curriculum. This way of thinking about feedback is leading us into the realm of meaning making. One's experiences with feedback and assessment may powerfully inform the way that one develops a concept of oneself as a learner and of learning itself. Many aspects of these concepts are somewhat uniquely formed and influenced since no two learners will have the exact same experiences. Here, I am identifying the importance of exploring how learners make meaning of the assessment systems they experience and the feedback they receive and how it is used for learning, although not all of these ways of knowing may be consciously recognised by the learner.

Given that providing effective feedback to the learner is complex and multi-levelled, the discussion in the first section of the chapter illustrates how differentiating responses to each learner interweaves many existing concepts of feedback. Exploration of feedback for the experienced professional learner needs to shed further light on specific features which aim to close the gap between referent and actual performance (Ramprasad, 1983), affect change in the process and strength of learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and promote self-evaluative, self-directed and self-regulated learning. I start the study with a view of feedback as having multiple functions for already-expert learners. It is a product of evaluation, giving information to improve performance; it is learning information for both teacher and learner; it is a process of actively constructed enculturation into a professional community of thought. As such it operates at several hierarchies of meaning, intent and effect. This thesis is interested in how feedback has capacity and potential to accomplish those functions. I may reveal

more ways in which feedback influences or energises learning. In short, I am interested in exploring the power of feedback in a professional learning environment. In the next section, I consider how a concept of feedback as power for learning which may involve the learner, the teacher and the curriculum may shape this thesis.

### *Implications for this thesis*

I have argued for the concept of adult professional learners as active participants in establishing and attaining their own learning goals, in transforming knowledge assisted by expert partners, and in the appropriation of culturally bound ways of being. This leads to the idea of feedback as a crucial stimulus to effective learning and a principle method of mediating learning through communication (Lyons et al., 1993). In this way, feedback could support the individual to deal with complexity involved in acquiring professional knowledge and skills (Moore, 1997). In a profitable context for study, knowledge, values and practices of this professional learning community would be communicated and evolved throughout a shared learning process (Newman et al., 1989; Wertsch, 1985; 1991), impacting on both individual and group development. In addition to these characteristics, a profitable professional learning environment for this study would need to include interplay between the reflective action and active reflection on the social context and the inner self (Bakhtin, 1981; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). This reflection on praxis as an evaluative dialogue (Schön, 1987) is a catalyst for the decision-making around teaching and practical action and its inclusion in course design would give scope for exploring appropriation of feedback tools. Such an example is provided in the professional preparation of

Teacher Leaders in Reading Recovery<sup>9</sup>. (Details of the goals of Reading Recovery itself and professional learning at the three categories of teacher, Teacher Leader and Trainer can be found in Appendix 1).

The focus for this study involves the exploration of individual meaning making around the essentially intangible and ultimately inaccessible, personally created realities. Just as there is no universal truth, there is no universal reality (Gergen, 1999). Therefore, the research questions (and ensuing design and methods) must be a means by which to explore many versions of realities in order to be able to understand and interpret how feedback works within learners' realities. To explore the study context and communicate the complexity within the above professional learning environment, I take a social constructionist stance to this study, using interpretative frameworks. The terms constructivism and constructionism though both referring to concepts of constructed reality are sometimes used interchangeably when discussing interpretive approaches to research (Crotty, 1998). However, the implications for research decisions make it valuable to distinguish between them. Using Gergen's (1990) definitions, social constructivism suggests that *'while the mind constructs reality in its relationship to the world, this mental process is significantly informed by influences from social relationships'* (p. 60). In contrast, social constructionism places an emphasis *'on discourse as the vehicle through which self and world are articulated, and the way in which such discourse functions within social relationships'*. Although both approaches align themselves to a subjective and somewhat unique construction of reality, constructivism prioritises the role of the

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<sup>9</sup> RR is a theoretically grounded, internationally known early intervention programme for children who are having difficulty developing literacy skills (Clay, 1997).

individual mind in creating meaning, while constructionism suggests that meaning is created by the discursive interaction between the individual and the world. A social constructionist analytic framework also draws attention to the process through which communities take ownership of social concepts and practices, and appropriate the means with which to define feedback, understand feedback and use it to its potential. The differences between these theoretical standpoints are important to this study since I have argued for the role of socially mediated practice to be understood in the term feedback when applied to complex learning. Feedback in the named RR professional learning environment may be provided in both written and oral forms and may act as a basis for further developing meaning into action. Therefore, feedback can be considered to assist the process of constructing our view of the world through social interaction with both peers and leaders of learning. In addition to this, constructionism would seem to include the affective aspects of perception and emphasise the complexities of human behaviour. Feedback on learning activity provides a further angle through which to construct our personal truths and realities, using the key role of language. The RR professional learning environment itself would seem to promote a social constructionist pedagogy, involving as it does collaboration in community, (Wenger, 1998) and an interplay of action and reflection (Kincheloe, 2003). For the purpose of this thesis, reality is viewed as socially constructed in the sense that our ideas categorise our perception of reality and emphasise the role of social interaction in the formation of perception. In other words, our ideas about our realities are often mediated by collaborative discovery (Berger & Luckman, 1967). One of the goals of this study is to find

ways of illuminating personal constructions that both form and inform understandings of personal and professional growth.

The question that guides exploration of feedback is therefore

*‘What is the role of feedback in complex professional learning?’*

### ***Summary***

Feedback has the potential to motivate, inspire and promote further critical reflection. Sources of feedback may result in an exclusively extrinsic or intrinsic effect (Laurillard, 1993) or move between the two, over time and across tasks. Feedback may be a means by which the learner evaluates their identity (*‘do I fit in here?’*) and academic attainment (*‘how am I doing here?’*). The ‘model’ provided by any leader of the learning and the conditions of ‘constructive interactions’ may be of critical importance in developing a sense of professional efficacy. It may also be a means of using informal information as a resource to provide self-feedback and professional skills.

It is clear from the theoretical stances discussed and critiqued above, that feedback can only be successful at enhancing achievement if its use leads to reflection and action by the student and the teacher (Black, 1993). There is always the potential to be misunderstood or reflection both in and on action to be temporarily deconstructive to the learner (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Some disturbance or noticed mismatch between current and required thinking and action may be essential for some forms of learning or development to occur.

I have been arguing for feedback not as an isolated course component but as a system that is a social and cultural practice (Mutch, 2003), with both positive and negative potential within such feedback systems (Ivanic et al., 2000). Having



argued for a feedback definition which is constructivist in nature, and somehow changes both learning and learner, design for exploration of feedback needs to allow for insight into personal meaning making that is shaped by and responds to curriculum, environment and reflection on both. Therefore, exploration of feedback practices and the associated learning will need to consider not only the feedback text itself (oral or written 'text') but the production, distribution and reception of feedback.

I have presented the case for feedback in a professional learning environment as having a distinct role. Often professional learning is aligned to system and organisational change (Argyris & Schön, 1974,1978). Therefore, feedback that equips professionals for complex and constantly evolving work environments has to include experiences that develop self-managed, self-directed, self-evaluative learning. The way that feedback needs to work in a professional learning environment needs to hold the learner's response system at its heart, therefore coming from a primarily constructivist paradigm but additionally embracing the idea of regulatory systems in cybernetic<sup>10</sup> theories. I have argued that the word feedback and associated definitions and descriptions, as currently interpreted and exemplified in the literature, may not communicate the complexity of how such feedback might 'work' for an adult professional learner. This study therefore will have potential for considering how learning environments associated with organisational and systemic change might design assessment systems and review assessment practices for elements, which both strive for higher cognition and transform the way in which the learner learns.

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<sup>10</sup> Cybernetics is the study of systems and control, typically involving regulatory feedback. The discipline works to abstract the principles of flow of information from one living organism to another and as such is not grounded in any one empirical field.

The goal of this thesis is to explore the practice of feedback and its potential for enhancing professional learning. Feedback, as an assessment product designed for learning, aims to give information about past performance and link it to future effort, to order to refine future activity. Feedback as a process gives experiences, which develop one's capacity for learning, by learning about learning. The next chapter outlines the purposes and goals of my thesis and considers how I will operationalise these goals and discusses ethical issues and potential for dissemination of my findings. I present the research focus in relation to design decisions, their rationales and their potential for achieving the thesis goals.

## **Chapter Three - Design and Methods**

## *Introduction*

Opportunities for reflection, self-assessment and continued improvement are identified in the literature as important aspects of professional growth and professional preparation (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lieberman & Miller, 1999). One way in which participants are explicitly provided such opportunities is through the use of feedback. However, feedback can only be successful at enhancing achievement if its use leads to reflection and action by the student and the teacher (Black, 1993). Clarity of the purpose of feedback needs to be understood by the student as an essential forerunner to the feedback itself becoming a mechanism for reflection and action. In Chapter Two, I argued for feedback in complex professional learning to be conceptualised as a complex social and cultural practice. Therefore, the exploration of feedback practices and the learning associated with it, may need to consider not only the feedback text itself (oral or written ‘text’) but the production, distribution and reception of feedback.

In this chapter, I firstly restate research purposes formulated from critical review of the literature surrounding the interaction of feedback and learning. Next, I take account of how research goals and contextual issues are related to the research methodology for this thesis and discuss how they guided my research decisions. This leads to considering the incidence, roles and uses of feedback and how this drives decisions regarding design and study context. I then establish participants and data sources that are most likely to enable me to investigate the complexity of the case setting and communicate participation in the setting. I set out the data collection schedule, discussing data analysis approaches to fulfil the stated goals

and design. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a summary of the research design and methods of this study.

### *Investigating feedback*

The goal of exploring the complex reactions, interactions and professional experience in the field, directs attention to the following over-arching question,

*What is the role of feedback in complex professional learning?*

Implicit within this question is the assumption that within a social environment, the use of feedback for learning will evolve and develop. Also implied is interest in how learners and teachers might act in, and reflect this process. Therefore, design and methods with this potential needed to include the facility to examine change over time in perception, use, and how learners contingently respond to perceptions of change. Design needed to employ a means to make known how the learners make meaning of feedback and how this changes over time, and could be available for detailed analysis. I will now consider the operationalisation of these research requirements to address the research question. I have argued that Reading Recovery (RR) professional learning for Teacher Leaders (TLs) provided a useful study context for an exploration into the role of feedback. The overall research question can be made more specific to this study context.

*How is the nature of learning and planned experiences characterised by the use of feedback?*

- In what ways do the TL trainee participants' understandings of feedback change over the year's course?
- In what ways does the experience of giving and receiving feedback support future professional activity as a teacher educator?
- How do Trainers use feedback opportunities to design planned learning experiences?

*How do TL trainees make sense of their own learning through feedback in the RR professional preparation year?*

- What role does feedback have in their learning?
- How do feedback processes and experiences contribute to their understanding of feedback?

A social constructionist stance on knowledge construction and learning demanding interpretive frameworks of qualitative analysis emerges from the discussion of the study context and research questions. Individual perceptions of the evolving reality are fluid, personally understood, responded to within and acted upon. The design and data sources utilised within this methodological perspective needed to illustrate the intricacy of thought and learning processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) in ways that can speak to both other RR professionals and the academic field.

### ***Design of the study***

The research goal is one of moving towards a greater understanding of the functions of feedback in professional learning and how the learner makes

meaning from the experience of receiving feedback and interrelated activities in this social setting. I have argued that the meaning making is individually constructed. Therefore, sampling the research context may not generate data which gives access to individual constructions of reality, since the range of interacting factors shaping reality come together in unique ways. This research seeks to explore and explain how feedback works in the professional learning environment to inform development of personal constructs of learning culture and personal roles within it. This suggested a design of case study, since it strives for holistic understanding of cultural systems of action (Feagin et al., 1990).

Since case studies are multi-perspective analyses, adoption of this design provided an opportunity to look at the feedback phenomenon from the perspective of both giver and receiver, considering not just the voice and perspective of learners and leaders of the learning, but also of the participant groups and the interaction between them. This important aspect of case study characteristics, that of investigating phenomena within real-life contexts, can lead to the distinctions between phenomenon and context being somewhat blurred, but may be better discerned by the use of multiple sources of data. Case study design and methods have been criticised on the grounds that the study of a small number of participants can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Others feel that the intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings. However, in this instance, I did not aim to offer generalisable understandings that will stand for all feedback in all situations. The goal was to explore a very specific type of learning context and to begin to understand how feedback acts and interacts with curriculum, learner and leader of the learning.

The case study design was used to reveal and highlight the detailed instances of the case itself (Stake, 1994). The design of the longitudinal case study allowed a focus on the changes occurring in views about and uses of feedback throughout the course of a professional learning programme. The case study recommends itself as a strong design for a study aiming to provide insight into the unique, situated features of feedback. Bell (1993) describes the case-study method as being a suitable design to focus on situated occurrences to peel back the layers of the complexity of the processes involved.

Acknowledging that case study design is appropriate to explore a complex learning environment, the identified case needed to have scope for examining change over time, the situated practical and academic activity, and a variety of feedback types and forms. The context of professional learning in Reading Recovery (RR) seemed to offer a profitable context for study, as knowledge is fluid, interacting with previous experiences, feelings and experiences in all areas of the TL course curriculum. Viewpoints and knowledge are both self-affirming and self-validating (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Therefore, this thesis investigated the process by which TL trainees orientate themselves with RR practices, philosophies and theories through the use of feedback. I go on to further expand the rationale for this research decision in the next section.

### *The study context*

Preparation for the pivotal role in the success of RR (Clay, 1997) includes TL trainee participants developing a self-concept of 'agent of change' (Fullan, 1993). Change agents are the catalysts for change; they combine the role of facilitator, advocate, and expert with exceptional interpersonal skills. They are vital to the



continuation and expansion of educational change (Fullan, 1993). Preparing agents of change is an important concept for professional preparation in the service of educational innovation. It may also be important for change processes for educational cultures or organisations not yet established in the mainstream of practice within a given discipline. Feedback in this environment needs to have capacity to prepare the learner to be active within their context, looking for opportunities for communication of the moral purpose of their goal and for communicating successes. Although TLs are trained through a partnership between the Local Authority and RNNN<sup>11</sup>, the ability to act as an agent of change will be a factor in the future expansion of RR in that locality.

The content and processes of the TL programme is delivered in four modules, three completed during the first year and a fourth (a MA research report) completed in a part-time year of study once the TL trainees have taken up the professional role (Appendix 2). The Research Methods in Literacy, and Literacy Development modules provide professional knowledge in the general field of early literacy, and are open to all MA students at ULIE. The module specific and unique to the TL learning programme is the Theory and Practice of RR. This module has two elements; namely, Teaching in RR and Tutoring in RR. In terms of allotted time, the primary learning environment is structured as workshop/seminar experiences. These juxtapose content and personal reflections; literature from the fields of professional development in education; early literacy development; RR literature; and observed fieldwork. Fieldwork elements include observation of and some participation in the teacher-training programme being delivered by an experienced TL, teaching of children in the RR programme with

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<sup>11</sup> Reading Recovery National Network

some Trainer<sup>12</sup> visits, and analytic observation of RR teaching in the form of the ‘live-lesson critique’<sup>13</sup> (Appendix 3). Feedback is therefore constructed for written and practical activity. An overview of feedback contexts is given in Appendix 4.

### *Methods of Enquiry*

The TL trainees’ experience of feedback in a social environment, as well as on an individual basis, is a planned element of the professional preparation. It seemed to be productive to identify and then study examples of feedback used as stimulus for learning and critical reflection, and in a context that will be used by TLs in their future professional role. This enabled exploration of feedback functioning as a process. The design of the methodology for building evidence for this thesis took the form of an exploratory case study, with the TL preparation course forming the case, and collects and presents detailed information about a specific group. The study context was the TL training Master’s course at the ULIE and the learning situated in the group’s customary environment (Gillham, 2000). A longitudinal approach was employed to chart change and professional growth over the period of the yearlong training course. Insights may have interest for other professional learning environments also concerned with preparing teacher educators, but this thesis does not aim to provide universal interpretations about the use of feedback, although there may be other contexts for which it has some applicability.

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<sup>12</sup> The leader of the learning in the study context is the RR Trainer.

<sup>13</sup> This refers to the observation of a RR lesson involving a teacher and child and the reflective discussions conducted by others whilst viewing.

The next section considers selection of participants and data sources most likely to provide the researcher with access to the kinds of information needed to support the drawing of trustworthy conclusions.

### *Participants*

In order to look at both written and oral feedback, and how it is used as for learning as preparation throughout the yearlong course, course participants (TL trainees and Trainers), recently qualified TLs were chosen to be key participants in this study. TL trainees are selected by their Local Authority (LA) or region to undertake the TL training, with the goal of implementing the RR In-service training for teachers in their locality. Entry requirements are qualified teacher status and recent Key Stage 1 (lower primary age), literacy-teaching experience. In addition to this, LAs are advised to select professionals for the TL role who have good communication skills, experience of managing adult learning environments and evidence of suitability for study at a Master's degree level (RRNN, 2005). With regard to this final point, if they are unable to demonstrate this in the form of previous qualifications of post-graduate courses, candidates may submit a piece of written work for their suitability to be assessed by the course team.

Obviously, each year's training group has a unique profile; they vary in age, gender, locality of professional employment and previous professional experience. This from time to time brings together course participants from other educational contexts across the UK (e.g. Republic of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) and occasionally from further afield (e.g. Nevis and St. Kitts) A table representing the diversity of professional experience in the group in this

study context can be found in Appendix 5. Participants included all four members of the TL-training group on the ULIE Master's course in the year 2003/04. To investigate the longer-term impact of feedback on the course participants' learning and professional preparedness, eight TLs who undertook the professional preparation in the two previous years, 2003-2004 and 2002 - 2003 were also included in the data collection.

RR Trainers have undergone a Trainer-training programme to equip them with the skills, insights and professional knowledge to successfully manage a RR Trainer role. This role is a complex one, ranging through highly developed expertise in teaching young children, academic roles with the Early Childhood and Primary Education school at ULIE (e.g. modular coordination, supervisory roles, course leadership, etc.) planning and implementing training programmes at the teacher and TL-level, providing on-going professional learning and support for established RR personnel (TLs, Link managers, Appendix 6), and giving political support to RR objectives and undertakings at the local, national and international level. Further details on TL and Trainer roles can be found in Appendix 6.

Each of the Trainer participants has differing lengths of experience as a university Trainer. At the start of the year this involved 13 years, 11 years and 3 years and 1 year experience respectively. One of the Trainers has international experience of training RR TLs at a University site and a national co-ordination role. I was at the time of data collection the least experienced of the Trainer participants, with regard to the RR Trainer role.

### ***Data Collection***

Interviews, examples of written feedback, participant observation, and course documents were used to investigate how feedback is used for learning and to illuminate change over time in its impact on and understanding of its role in learning of the TL trainees. The following section describes the forms of data collected in the thesis with rationales for their potential in providing insights relating to the research questions.

### ***Interviews***

Within this study, the actual experiences of, and personal responses to feedback are of interest. Therefore, interviews were used to illuminate the personal meaning making and learning which are triggered by the participants' experiences (Kvale, 1996). The participants were already familiar with me within the course context and so I had opportunities to talk to them about the goals of my research and to seek informed consent. As the interviews are not part of the planned course experience, interviews asking participants to reflect on feedback did not take place within the course context. Interviews with current and previous course members were conducted by telephone and audio recorded. Use of the telephone allowed me to gather information rapidly and gave access to the course participants who lived in different areas of the UK and Ireland. It is reported that respondents can be less willing to discuss personal opinions and sensitive information over the telephone (Groves & Kahn, 1979; McCann et al., 1984). Also, De Vaus (1991) suggests that telephone interviews are unsuitable for complex subjects such as needed by this data. However, I already had a well established relationship with the TL participants so it was anticipated that

difficulties of talking to them about sensitive issues would be somewhat overcome by our face-to-face working relationship. In telephone communication there is an inevitable loss of information through body language and facial expression. Although observation of non-verbal information was not possible in this method, it gave scope for interpretation through changes in pitch, tone and pace. It also meant that, as I was reliant on using these voice qualities for insight into mood and emotions, I returned continually to the audiotapes themselves to check for evidence and did not allow my own interpretation of words alone to influence the meanings I made of their words. I also spent some time at each interview checking with each participant the particular meaning they had intended me to receive from occasions when it was not clear through verbal information alone. This method allowed for personal and individual contact between the researcher and participant (interviewer and the interviewee), which built on a pre-existing relationship within the IOE course setting.

I conducted a pilot telephone interview which had two purposes. The interview created a 'baseline' of feedback experiences and opinions prior to receiving any formal or planned (both oral and written) feedback on the course. It also tested potential inhibitions when discussing personal feelings and sensitive issues. The method did not prevent the TL participants from talking about their own feelings and experiences and they did not seem reticent to talk following the questions designed to test confidentiality and trust issues (see Appendix 7 for a baseline interview schedule). The use of telephone interviews enabled a reduction in both bias and the influence of power relationships. The TL participants were interviewed in their own home at a time they had decided. They were more free to end the interview at any time than had we been face-to-face at the IOE.

Confidentiality was greater than had we chosen a room in IOE since we could not be interrupted by any IOE staff, including other members of the Trainer team, and there was no possibility of being overheard. Frey (1995) suggests that face-to-face interviews can be particularly influenced by the interviewer's body language and other physical signals interpreted as evaluative, whereas telephone interviews are not subject to these potential risks. I argue that telephone interviews have a distancing effect that eliminates some of the elements leading to potential bias in face-to-face interviews. This is important to this study. In addition to this, as Frey (1983) points out, a telephone interview can be completed more quickly than either a mail survey or face-to-face interviews where appointments would need to be scheduled alongside an already full schedule of attendance at IOE, academic readings and activity and fieldwork experiences.

The time for each of the telephone interviews was pre-arranged with participants in order to minimise imposition on their schedules (Cohen et al., 2000). A plan for each interview was prepared so that the same invitations to talk freely about their opinions and thoughts at each point in time would be given to each participant. General ideas taken from previous data collection and field notes of the TL trainees' comments and questions in seminars were recorded on these plans (Appendix 8). This approach ensured short and focussed interviews, which would be easier to compare and analyse (Burnard, 1994). Exploratory interview techniques were used to ensure that each participant felt able to talk about personal perceptions and interpretations. What they had said was summarised and reflected back to the participant frequently during the interview. As well as checking my own understanding and interpretation, this gave value to what they were saying and invited the interviewee to continue with the next step in their

thinking. Connecting questions helped keep the flow of a natural conversation whilst probing for more reflection. Summaries, connecting questions and reflecting the interviewees' words back to them allowed responses to each individual to proceed in a less biased, unstructured way but ensured that the interview did not digress too far from the topic.

(i) Teacher Leader trainees

Telephone interviews were combined with the course task timing itself to construct 'feedback loops' (Appendix 9). These 'loops' occurred at different points throughout the course with different written assignments. In the week following receipt of a piece of written feedback, a telephone interview was conducted with each of the TL trainee participants to consider how the feedback enabled development of the assignment itself and of their learning. These interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed.

The final interview was conducted face to face. This interview took more time as I wanted the TL trainee participants to reflect on their year of professional preparation and identify the course elements they wished to refer to as seminal in guiding their understanding of learning and teaching tools in the RR teacher professional development experiences they would provide in the following year. The TL trainee participants interrupted my questions and probes more than they had done over the telephone, but continued to reflect on both experiences and emotions freely. They continued to be prepared to be constructively critical of their experiences and to link them to times when they had felt less than happy with their learning. By now the relationship with the TL trainees blurred social



and learning interactions, so the method brought forward honest and sometimes unfavourable reflections on their experiences.

(ii)Teacher Leader course participants trained in the previous 2 years

Telephone interviews were conducted with previous course members to investigate how the experience of giving and receiving feedback in the course environment has impacted on their learning and developing professional skills as they now carry out their new professional roles. Again here, I already had an earlier and ongoing collegiate relationship with these TLs so they were prepared to openly discuss how they viewed feedback and how feedback experiences during the TL preparation course impacted on their current perceptions of giving feedback to RR teachers. I interviewed the previous course participants at the end of the data collection period, as I wanted to be able to look at and take account of the TL trainee perspectives at the end of their professional preparation year before compiling an interview schedule for the experienced TLs. These interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed.

Telephone interviews, with both TL trainee and experienced TL participants, were used as purposeful conversations (Robson, 2002) to elucidate the intents and interpretations of the participants. Schedules for interviews of topics and areas (Powney & Watts, 1987) assisted the goal of exploration, following participants' responses (Cohen et al., 2000), whilst ensuring that the focus did not stray too far from purposeful talk around the stated questions and probes. This method is supportive of the epistemology guiding the understanding of how the learner is an active constructor of their own meaning making and how this meaning making is impacted upon and mediated by others.

### *Group focus interviews*

A focus group interview with Trainer participants was included to gather information about human perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts in a non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1994). It was used to ask very specific questions about the topic after considerable data collection had already been completed (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.365). Investigative questions were used to elicit maximum responses by all participants regarding how Trainers perceived the role of feedback in learning, the decision-making process around task timing and feedback content, and to indicate my interest in receiving narratives of the complexity of the learning environment being created (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.65).

### *Examples of Written Feedback*

The examples of written feedback used as data for analysis included feedback written to the TL trainees and feedback written by the TL trainees.

#### (i) Feedback written to the TL trainees

Written and oral feedback was generated by both written and practical learning activity during the course. The data collection strategy identified case study activity as an example of a learning instance with several rounds of feedback<sup>14</sup>.

Group negotiation of meaning surrounded the learning and feedback, which is typical of problem-based assessment systems (Savin-Baden, 2003). Case studies have a wealth of practical, real life examples that can be used both as exemplars

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<sup>14</sup> The case study activity and the case studies themselves become the resource for writing a series of reports for differing audiences; an academic journal; a report to the child's school; and a reflective report on how the case study and associated activity contributed to learning (see Appendix 4).

and to contextualise theoretical concepts and decision making processes, which makes case studies effective pedagogical tools for shifting the emphasis from Trainer-centred to more TL-centred activity. Written feedback to case study activity, observations of the teaching of a RR pupil and observations of opportunities to take parts of the training sessions for teachers were included as part of the data.

(ii) Feedback written by the TL trainees

During the course, the TL trainees construct written feedback for a teacher training in RR. One piece of feedback is in response to a range of assessments administered to the lowest achieving 6 year olds in their school context, the other is a record of their discussion surrounding an observation of a RR lesson. In addition to this, the TL trainees also construct a piece of feedback to one of their trainee colleagues following an observation of the teaching of a child in RR. These examples of feedback written by the TL trainees were also used as data since they provided evidence of whether, or to what extent, the TL trainees have begun to appropriate the feedback practices they have themselves received, in their work with teachers.

*Documentary data*

Course handbooks and other course materials were used to ‘triangulate’ conclusions about learning stimulated by both oral and written feedback. These handbooks set out the purposes and goals of the RR TL preparation course and provided additional information that influenced how the Trainer or TL trainee participants understood or used the feedback opportunities.

### *Field notes*

As Denzin (1989) comments, "*cultures do not provide within their social structures a role called participant observer*" (p. 162), yet observation occurred in several settings; course evaluations; visits to the teaching of children in the TL trainees own locality; leading teachers in 'live-lesson critique' and discussion at 'host' teacher training groups, and feedback to colleagues as part of live-lesson critique sessions within the TL professional preparation course. Some of these interactions were audio-recorded, some captured in field notes. I had to create a different role during these observation points in order to capture naturalistic descriptions. Unlike occasions where I was called upon to provide formal feedback to TL trainees, I did not intervene or comment on what was happening, merely observed. My presence may have subtly altered proceedings, but I sought no active part, distancing myself from the Trainer role in observation settings. These resources allowed me add to the interview data by linking back to the TL trainees' perceptions and to look for links to themes and patterns emerging from the analytic process of interview and written documents.

The Trainer perspective on how feedback is intended to work was also captured in field notes. Feedback issues were discussed several times during the period of data collection and in team meetings during the analysis phase. I was able to capture personal reflections and stances towards feedback as they occurred naturally, rather than asking Trainer colleagues to respond to questioning informed by interviews with the TL trainees. As both Trainer and researcher, I was focused on feedback for learning in more detail than was previously the case,

so capturing naturally occurring interactions allowed the TL trainee voice perspectives to emerge.

### *Research diary*


The research diary was a context for me to reflect on my roles as Trainer and researcher. These dual roles offered both unique opportunity and potential for bias. I have been involved with Reading Recovery intermittently since 1994, working as RR teacher, Teacher Leader and Trainer. I therefore have in-depth knowledge of RR implementation at these three levels. Whilst I am currently in the position of Trainer, I worked as a colleague to many of the experienced TL participants and therefore have good relations and shared experiences with them. I became part of the Trainer team in 2002. At the point of this research, I was the newest member of the Trainer team and it was well known that I had been a part of the TL community. This led to some shared insights with the TL trainees. The research diary was therefore key to identifying and reflecting on how these two roles might impact on methods and conduct of this research. I recorded how my history and experience with RR might produce bias within the questions that I asked and the interpretations I produced. I was therefore able to ensure that I planned open questions, not leading participants to answers that might over-emphasise my own viewpoint. I was also able to plan and reflect on decision-making points during the data collection phase and record interrelatedness of different research activities. This was then used as a data source to check emerging hypothesis. I discuss how the issues of bias were addressed in Chapter Four.

### *Schedule for Data Collection*

The data collection occurred at key points throughout the TL training year (see Figure 4 below) in order to examine change over time. It provided indicators of development and supported hypothesis forming to service analysis of other data types.

To summarise data collection decisions, Trainers and TL trainees are key participants since they are situated in the study context itself (Robson, 2002). Gathering the opinions and perceptions of the participants was essential to achieve the thesis goal. Therefore the data comprised transcripts of telephone interviews with the TL trainees and previous course participants, transcripts of course evaluation sessions, examples of feedback written by both TL and Trainer participants, field notes referring to oral feedback to teaching and leading teachers during live lesson critiques, including participation by both TL trainees and Trainers, and course documents.

Research cycles	Data type				
	Interviews	Planned Feedback (oral and written)	Observation	Field notes	
<b>October</b>	Baseline interview				Ongoing weekly reflections by TL trainee and Trainer
<b>November</b>		Written feedback to case study	Oral Feedback to colleagues teaching for live critique	Seminar to discuss written feedback	
<b>December</b>	Telephone interviews with TL trainees		Term 1 course evaluation		
<b>January</b>		Feedback to teaching in own context		Feedback to activity with visits to teaching	
<b>February</b>		TL trainee feedback to a teacher		Seminar to discuss written feedback	
<b>March</b>	Telephone interviews with TL trainees		Term 2 course evaluation		
<b>April</b>				Feedback to activity with teacher training groups	
<b>May</b>	Group focus interview with Trainers	TL accounts of feedback to teachers			
<b>June</b>	Telephone interviews with TL trainees	Written feedback to portfolio work	1. Oral Feedback to colleagues teaching for live critique 2. Final course evaluation		
<b>July</b>	Telephone interviews with previous course participants				



**Figure 4: Schedule of Data Collection**

### ***Data Analysis***

Analysis using grounded theory method begins with identification of the themes educed from the raw data, a process sometimes referred to as "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the open coding phase, the conceptual categories in the feedback examples and the interview transcripts were identified and tentatively named. The goal here was to create descriptive categories to form a preliminary framework for analysis. Intentions, ways of responding or themes that appeared to be similar were grouped around one category. These categories were gradually modified or replaced during the subsequent stages of analysis. As the dialogue between researcher and data continued (Miles & Huberman, 1994), an "audit trail" was developed to identify the progress of data initially analysed by participant or the particular context and later 're-formed' in its categorisation.

Wherever possible, participant voices were used to represent the described themes with definitions being developed simultaneously to ground theories in the context.

At the next stage of analysis, the identified categories were re-examined, compared and combined to determine links, termed "axial coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The resulting 'big picture' as the data are re-contextualised has the goal of recounting a narrative that "*closely approximates the reality it represents*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 57). Multiple realities are represented as integrated categories, grouped around the meanings made by participants (or outcomes intended by the feedback documents). The following figure demonstrates how the data are treated using grounded theory methods.



*Figure 5: Data Collection and Analysis schedule integrated with constant comparative methods, adapted from Glaser & Strauss, 1967*

Data collection and analysis formed both an iterative and on-going process throughout this study. Each interview was transcribed after completion and then reviewed before the next data collection point. Each example of written feedback was reviewed alongside the telephone interviews so that at every subsequent occasion of data collection, interpretations and their links with other data sources could be labelled with the emerging categories. The telephone interviews were conducted with the experienced TLs at the end of the data collection cycles (see Figure 4). This enabled TLs who had trained the previous year to be included, as well as allowing use of an interview schedule, which was designed around emerging and tentative theory.

The aim of data analysis is to reconstruct what participants present as their reality and to explore how experiences and process contribute to their view (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992). As such the role of analysis is to interpret words and actions and develop a theory which communicates “*self, language, social setting and social object*” (Schwandt, 1994, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.124) but one that remains grounded in the behaviour, words, actions and setting of the participants. The data is ‘transformed’ into a narrative and representation, which makes sense to one not embedded in that context, through the role of existing literature and research. The literature acts as a sensitising agent to lift patterning and coding beyond low level and embedded insights towards theory generation. This transformation process involves moving from describing what is seen in the data, towards linking and explaining relationships across context and time. By way of illustration, the development of a concept is presented in Appendix 10, by first presenting a section of interview data and the memoing related to it. Then

the process of transformation of data is related to one concept, its dimensions and properties.

### *Summary*

The data collected during this study comprises a series of telephone interviews with current and past TL course members, TL-Trainer interactions during course evaluations and constructing feedback following observations of peer teaching, written examples of feedback written for and by TL trainees course documentation and a research diary. Data were analysed using the steps of the constant comparative method. Each telephone interview was transcribed and set against the collected examples of written feedback after each point of data collection and reviewed before the next data collection point.

This chapter has argued that the design and methods adopted are the most likely to achieve the aim of providing a structure and research activity for exploring the complexities of feedback used in a professional learning environment. The next chapter goes on to discuss the potential pitfalls of researching one's own context and describes what I did to help overcome potential power imbalance and researcher bias issues that might threaten the trustworthiness of the research findings.

## **Chapter Four: The Researcher as Instrument**

### *Introduction*

Managing the roles of researcher and participant can be demanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Part of persuading the reader that my findings are worth taking account of, involves demonstrating the reliability of the research procedures and the openness of the research decisions. Moreover, part of the rationale for using grounded theory as a method of data analysis is its potential for interpreting the cultural knowledge and experience and transforming it into a theory which others can understand. A range of issues related to subjectivity, experiential knowledge, and researcher roles will impact on this analytic process. In the reporting of findings my goal was to present clear answers to the following questions: What roles did I assume? What dilemmas did I face? How did subjectivity both constrain and strengthen the research? How did I deal with potential risks to trustworthiness?

I begin by examining the integral role of achieving trustworthiness in this interpretive framework for enquiry by discussing issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989). I describe how I overcame concerns related to the design and methods used in this thesis. I go on to present details of ethical procedures and consider a suitable dissemination strategy for the thesis findings. I conclude the chapter with a summary statement.

### *Trustworthiness*

Qualitative, observational research involves a transparent, well-understood relationship between the researcher and research participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It could be argued that participant observation as a means of

examining socially situated knowledge and practices may change perceptions and actions of the participants being observed. The constructionist paradigm rests firmly on a theory of multiple realities. Although any group that is studied is changed in some way by the attendance of the researcher, particular disadvantages of shorter-term observational studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994) did not apply to this study, due to the unique researcher-position, discussed in Chapter Three. I continue by discussing how credibility is protected in this researcher-practitioner role.

### *Credibility*

Credibility, the confidence in the insights and whether or not they are presented as 'truths' in the findings of a particular enquiry, is achieved by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These require the researcher to reflect on whether the constructed realities of the participants and the realities I attribute to them are compatible. Prolonged engagement with the particular context of the study compensates alterations of the context from researcher-impact. Frequent and recurring opportunities to visit the field of enquiry allowed a developing view of what is significant in the data alongside a process of recurrent and exploratory analysis. The longitudinal aspect of the design allowed me to collect data at regular intervals and across a range of study context settings (see Chapter Three, Figure 4, p. 75). This, along with 'negative case analysis' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), considerably lessened the threat of having 'one-off' or unusual profiles and behaviours forming part of the data. It also allowed patterns and emerging theories to be examined across a range of learning contexts and in a variety of

methods to collect actions and words. This makes the realities I represent more likely to stand for the relevancies within this context.

Reflexivity also impacts on the credibility of findings. This required me to be open about the *“researcher’s contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining outside one’s subject matter while conducting research”* (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228). I consider this a strength and resource, and by providing evidence of research reflexivity, I demonstrate how my role was contributory to the insights gained (as discussed in Chapter Three). Added to this, bias is an ongoing potential during interviews (Denzin, 1992). Do the participants answer in a particular way due to a need for acceptability? The questions asked aimed to be open, giving participants messages that were accepting of responding honestly. The responses were sometimes critical of their experiences, so it would seem that participants felt free to talk about issues, which may not have been possible had they seen me only in my Trainer role. In my professional role, I am part of this context and so it is inevitable that my values and beliefs will have shaped the transformation process as I represent the data as a descriptive and analytic narrative. It will also have inevitably changed me.

Eliciting convergent and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study will further protect the credibility of how I represent my interpretations. Triangulation of the data was carried out through matching common themes found in telephone interview transcripts and examples of written feedback with emergent themes from other data sources, such as field notes, participant observation and document analysis. This occurred both concurrently

with data collection and after data collection. I also used less obtrusive forms of data, which were not related to my presence at sessions, in order to both check my interpretation of participant realities and to provide what are termed 'slice of life' examples. I collected examples of feedback written by the TL participants to both a fieldwork visit to RR teacher and written feedback on an assessment task. This allowed me to integrate how participants were using the feedback for learning into the analysis process. I used reflective writing focused on how the giving and receiving of feedback had informed their future professional decision-making. I also had access to similar reflective writing from other previous training cohorts to check whether the submissions of participants were atypical given their knowledge of my stated interest in feedback. Member checks further checked the interpretation of the words and actions of participants. Returns to the participant-source of information to check both the data record itself and the interpretation was achieved in two ways. (i) Discussion with thesis supervisors maintained a check on the overall adequacy of the data and its analysis. This was particularly valuable since one of two supervisors was not from within the RR context. This sharpened discussions about the reality I was representing and ensured I was clear and faithful in my descriptions without over-stating the case. This informed a balanced approach to the analysis and discussion of data. (ii) TL trainee participants were also involved in member checking. Interpretations of data were shared and checked with two of the TL trainees. This enabled checks on ways in which data interpretation was related to the perceived reality of the participants themselves.

The participants re-constructed and described their realities for me in the interviews. Therefore, the conduct of the interviews and type of interview



chosen were crucial to the credibility of my findings. Researcher conduct during interviews made it necessary to neutralise my reactions to strong or critical opinions of the participants so that they should feel un-judged in their opinions, which might not accord with my own. Questions were aimed at elucidating rather than producing short or closed responses. The interview process itself was recursive, with meaning checking and the use of previous interviews to develop the participants' story as part of the activity. In addition, it should be clear to the reader that perceptions and insights came from the participants themselves, not led by the researcher's expectations.

As a researcher I need to be cognizant of the fact that there are usually power imbalances in research; participants control only whether to withdraw their participation, not other research decisions. I made efforts to minimise the effects of the power imbalance. For example, the telephone interviews took place when they were in their own home, the place they were most likely to feel in control. I developed and made clear boundaries for how I separated the roles of researcher and teacher. I never referred to anything that they had talked about during sessions at IOE. I made assurances of confidentiality, anonymity and the value of their opinions. Fifteen participants made complete anonymity somewhat impossible to achieve, but within restrictions of number, confidentiality regarding origin of comments was not breached. It seemed that TL participants felt able to recount their realities, demonstrated in part by the many occasions their reflections were constructively critical of their experiences, throughout the time of the study. It seemed as if the shared and collaborative style of the learning context supported me in trying to redress the effects of power imbalances.

Peer debriefing with a Trainer-colleague outside the context of the study but with a general understanding of the nature of the study, has also facilitated review of process, perceptions and interpretations to maintain credibility. This was particularly valuable since the colleague works in another educational context, so viewed the data ‘with different eyes’ or percept of reality. These informal conversations were useful to test emerging hypotheses and alternative interpretations with a knowledgeable yet not directly involved colleague, further enhancing credibility.

I next discuss how far the findings of a study can be transferred to other similar context and participants.

### *Transferability*

This issue of transferability is not addressed by discussion in this chapter alone. Other contexts will need to be compared to the context of this thesis; the more similarities that can be recognised, the more likely that findings are transferable. All observations and their critique are contextually bound. However, to assist evaluation of transferability, the density and detail of description used to communicate the environment under investigation should allow some judgments to be made by the reader. The ‘insider-researcher’ role has allowed a range of contextual descriptive details to be added to clarify data instances for the reader. The study design and setting maximizes the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context by purposively selecting settings and participants. The study participants include a range in experience of both Trainers and TLs and focuses on an environment where participation allows the voices and the perceptions of all participants to be heard.

Participants in this study represent a critical case sample. They are likely to be somewhat similar to other participants in complex learning for teachers and therefore have potential to produce recognisably similar findings (Erlandson, et al. 1993). Like many courses drawing on the population of primary age phase teachers and education authority managers, women predominate, though some men are represented in the data. They range in age from mid twenties to late fifties. They are more likely to be over 40 since these already-expert professionals enter this context to undergo professional preparation for a management role, as well as that of teacher educator. The recommended requirements for course enrolment suggest that likely participants have some years experience as classroom teachers and possibly some as Advisory teacher or educational consultant prior to taking on the role of RR TL. They are drawn from a variety of educational backgrounds and contexts and cover a wide age range (see Appendix 5). Therefore, the emerging theories are based on relevance to understanding feedback, not on age, gender, educational experience or particular only to the context.

The subsequent section considers the dependability of descriptions of this study context.

### *Dependability*

Consistency and transparency of the research process impacts on the dependability of the results. This is enhanced by an enquiry audit (Cohen et al., 2000), cataloguing an archive facilitating access to all documentation, as well as a running account of the process of enquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The audit trail for this study includes all field notes and records of participation in contexts

that involved the planned giving or receiving of feedback. An example of how I got from initial data to the building of more theoretical concepts and links can be found in Appendix 10. The use of N'Vivo software further supported dependability as it builds a history of developing codes and their origins. Therefore, there is a clear and discernible path between the words of the participants and the theory resulting from analysis. I also kept a research diary throughout to reflect on next steps for the study, sampling decisions, ethical concerns, and so on. Alongside the audit trail, the research diary allowed me to continue to reflect on how subjectivity might influence decisions and to review decisions once they had been made.

By providing full and detailed description of research decisions and research methods in Chapter Three, I hope that researchers wishing to undertake a stepwise replication of this study in a differing context would be able to draw on this. I now consider how the representations of the participants in this study context can be authenticated.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability needs to remove doubts as to the quality of representation and transformation of perceptions and personal narratives. The study findings need to be the product of the focus of enquiry, not researcher bias (Robson, 2002).

Confirmability is achieved when data examples can be traced back to their original situations and when the logic behind analysis decisions leads to an explicit and coherent sequence of description (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Such accounts are important to demonstrate that researcher-bias has not skewed the design of a study, the data collection or analysis phase (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Use of ideas from literature throughout the reporting of analyses not only allows independent confirmation of interpretation, but also allows my emerging theories to be placed in the context of what is already described in relation to feedback and its relationship to learning and not to be the product of "*figments of the [researcher's] imagination*" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). An open stance to observing and describing group patterns, similarities, and differences as they occur can prevent preconceptions or expectations of meaning obstructing new understandings of the data collected. Returning to and reviewing the original taped recordings of telephone interviews enabled the participants' emphases, intonations and pauses to think, to remain in my interpretation. Whereas unqualified objectivity is unattainable (Patton, 1990), the influences of subjectivity are always a possibility (Crotty, 1998). This is a particular risk since I was immersed in the community before beginning the thesis enquiry, so can be described as a participant-observer, despite being a 'marginal participant' (Robson, 2002), as I now discuss.

My unique position brought strengths as well as risks. I have been part of the RR enterprise for some years, working as RR teacher, Teacher Leader and now university Trainer. I brought experiential knowledge of the complexities of the setting. I also had in depth knowledge of the socio-political pressures of the TL role. My understanding of the TL role addressed the power balance in some way. I was regarded as one of them and in some ways charged with making the TL voice heard. Therefore, I had responsibilities to them.

I also had responsibility for them. I was aware of occasions when workload or stresses of travel to fieldwork might have increased pressure on them. Therefore,

research decisions were able to avoid times at which emotional reactions due to tiredness and time constraints may have made the role of emotion in learning more apparent in the data than would be typical or pervasive. Therefore I was able to shape and redirect the thesis design to fit knowledge of and sensitivity to the context (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

The role of researcher in my own context brought issues of assuming multiple roles. I had been 'insider' as a TL and when interviewing I was returned to that role. But in participant observation I was an 'outsider', as I had another role in that context. These multiple realities did allow me to cross some boundaries. The participants began to say that they looked forward to our arranged telephone conversations. I took great care never to comment on their points or to offer solutions. It seemed that to be given an opportunity to reflect on their learning and to say how they felt, provided some support for them. It has meant that at times I have had to hear about criticism and not use that as an opportunity to give the Trainer perspective. That has been challenging. I have also had the opportunity to observe in detail considerable personal growth in awareness of their strengths and to celebrate in their sense of achievement. It has been an emotional journey for researcher and participants alike.

My in-depth knowledge and experience of the context also brought risks. I have had to find ways to acknowledge my biases and rigorously consider them during all processes of the study. As a RR Trainer my biases include wanting to present findings, which increase the likelihood of RR being implemented more widely. The design of the study therefore did not test hypotheses, it explored without pre-ordained outcomes. My bias would want to represent the job of work that my

colleagues and myself undertake to be of high quality. I therefore do not stray into evaluating roles or the learning programme. I look for ways in which feedback as an experience acts on learning and learners, while remaining mindful of potential bias, which may stray into 'selling' Reading Recovery. In this way the research diary has been invaluable. I have been able to identify and record the ways in which I am predisposed to certain interpretations and return to them continually as I have drawn the emerging themes and concepts into a representation of multiple realities.

Since qualitative observational research also necessitates a transparent, well-understood relationship between the researcher and research participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I communicated my role as one of observer of their realities and learner. This was important both to conduct the study effectively and to build acceptance by the TL participants (Hutchby & Wooffit, 1998).

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical issues pertinent to the conduct of case study research were considered during the research period and when undertaking data analysis. The design for this research involved observation of and interaction with groups. Therefore, considerations included the need for informed consent by the participants, the potential for distress or risk to participants, reliable interpretations and presentation and confidentiality for, and anonymity of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The British Educational Research Association guidelines (BERA, 1992) were observed and ULIE ethical clearance obtained. Additionally, this context

demanding observation of a learning community in which I am immersed and therefore has clear ethical issues involving the effect of power relationships (Cohen et al., 2000; Patton, 1990). As part of the Trainer-team with responsibility for marking and grading their professional and academic preparation, it may have been difficult for the TL trainee participants to deny or remove their consent. However, the atmosphere of trust that grows between Trainer and TL trainee colleagues has meant that individuals grow increasingly honest and open about how they perceive the learning environment. The effects of power are somewhat diminished by being situated in the learning context itself, but I relied on the openness and willingness of the TL trainees. I also have obligations to TL trainees to guarantee that I report my findings honestly with high regard for their confidentiality and anonymity. The issue of anonymity is potentially problematic when such small numbers of participants are involved in the TL training group. To overcome this, I have given each participant a pseudonym in the data, so that their identity is not explicit in the recounting of outcomes of the analysis (Appendix 11). Therefore, when I shared the data in a written form with my supervisors or any other personnel to support my development of the data collection and analysis, names of participants were not explicit to them. My research also investigated the role of the Trainer. The issues of anonymity had some parallels with the TL trainee participants. Although the power relationship issues do not exist in the same form, it was nevertheless important that Trainer colleagues gave informed consent to their participation, even though it would be difficult for my colleagues to resist research that further promotes and theorises the RR programme.



The communication of findings and insights to promote, theorise and inform is discussed in the next section.

### *Dissemination of findings*

Through dissemination I improve validity of findings. The most immediate dissemination will take the form of a letter of thanks to participants, including a short summary of the principal findings of this thesis. I will provide an executive summary for my Trainer team colleagues and include discussion of findings in annual and ongoing curriculum review. I also intend to seek opportunities to disseminate my findings more widely by presenting seminars and writing a paper for the ULIE based publication, *Educate*. There also opportunities for wider dissemination through appropriate journals, including the RR international journal.

### *Summary*

My professional role facilitated access to the study context and its participants as well as influencing interpretations of the data. This participant role contributed to a richer and more reliable description of the culture of teaching and learning in RR. Nonetheless, potential subjectivity remained a concern that was reviewed at each tutorial session with my supervisors. This concern was also addressed by continually reviewing how the research conduct impacted on credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. I addressed trustworthiness and confirmability goals throughout by providing interpretations of setting, context and incident with clear discussion of my decision-making throughout the research process. The study deals with subjectivity issues in two ways: 1. By addressing

personal involvement with the participants and 2. By emphasising the meanings derived from the interplay between the curriculum resource and the TLs' previous professional knowledge and experiences. I acknowledge the complexities of this involvement with the context and its participants and the potential for bias but consider the benefits of prior knowledge and experience with RR's knowledge and practices as outweighing the liabilities. Involvement enabled me, from an informed perspective, to consider how the culture designs and conducts feedback. In the short term, my research informs my professional practice as I continue to provide feedback to RR teachers, TL trainees and TLs working in their regions, in my professional role as a RR Trainer. The insights gained feed into the Trainer role in course and curriculum development. Another goal for dissemination of this thesis is to draw attention to the sources of the efficacy of RR professional preparation in supporting teacher educators for early literacy interventions. For the wider research community, it provides a description of the complexity and power of one aspect of further professional training that supports a complex professional role, providing detailed description of a curriculum designed to capitalise on opportunities for this enhanced view of power of feedback in developing reflective practice.

In the next chapter I present the evidence for conceptualising feedback as a seminal process in professional learning.

## **Chapter Five: A Constructionist Learning Process**

### *Introduction*

The complex ways in which learning occurs can be usefully interpreted using a social constructionist framework (Smagorinski, 1995; Wertsch et al. 1991). In this framework, learning processes occur as part of interactions shaped by psychological, dialogic, social, pedagogical and mediational tools. These operate as teaching strategies<sup>15</sup> that encourage engagement with, and joint regulation of the learning. Leaders of the learning use these cultural tools as a feedback process to influence the pattern and rate of development. Feedback can work in relation to specific tasks and also promote effective and complex learning by acting in more universal ways to inspire, shape and energise learning. These feedback qualities can be seen as ‘power’ or capacity.

In this chapter, I begin by considering how feedback might be considered to have power and drawing from the data, ways in which feedback can be seen as having power for learning. I then argue for feedback being seen as a complex process with both short and more long-term functions by presenting ways in which feedback strategies promote learning and reflection on learning, as revealed in the data. I draw on literature critiqued in Chapter Two to extend and test understanding emerging from within the data and bring in new literature when something new and novel is uncovered. I conclude with a chapter summary.

### ***Feedback that Powers Learning***

Power, when applied to a social practice such as feedback, may add several useful aspects to its meaning. Firstly, it refers to its capacity to act effectively. In terms

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<sup>15</sup> Tools and strategies refer to the same level of learning-function and are used interchangeably in this chapter. Many different tools make up the constructionist learning process of feedback.

of feedback, effectiveness might be partly viewed as its ability to produce action or reflection. Earlier chapters have discussed that efficacy may be a somewhat individual construct – what works for one learner, does not work as well for another. This relates to its usefulness or accessibility for the learner. Feedback would lack power if it were communicated in language that was too culturally bound or too complex for the learner at that point in his/her learning. Feedback would also lack power if it delivered information about the gap between actual and desired performance by telling the learner the surface features to attend to, rather than involving the learner in the process of comparing learning goals to actual performance. One could say that this transmission approach might still produce a better performance level. Nevertheless, I would refer to the argument in Chapter Two that feedback, as part of assessment for learning should communicate with future action, by sharing learning goals. Individualising may involve communication that is more than information about cognition alone. I therefore consider this as part of feedback potential – the degree to which it provides personalised information and inspiration that is acted upon in future learning. Secondly, power also speaks to the degree, or amount, or permanence with which feedback stimulates action or reflection. A piece of feedback may produce some low level reflection on a learning task but not sufficient to engage the learner in reflection which will in some way change future action. The term may also refer to the speed or force with which action and future learning are stimulated. Feedback may be so compelling as to create a fast rate of progress, or it may produce a small learning effect. Therefore, I use the term ‘power’ to communicate the strength, the speed and the permanence of effect on learning and reflection on learning.

During the professional preparation course, participants have received feedback in differing environments and with the range of goals already described (see Appendix 2 for course description). In what ways could these feedback instances be seen to have power that is useful to the learner in maintaining optimum opportunities for learning? Feedback in this study context of the MA LLLD professional preparation for Teacher Leaders (TLs) was seen to have three main forms of influence with which it might power learning; to motivate the learner, to provide a reciprocal exchange system for personalising learning and to quicken the pace of learning. I now describe the ways in which these three potentials were observed in written feedback examples and in the perceptions of TL participants.

### *Motivator*

Feedback can provide information which motivates the learner. This may mean providing praise for aspects of the performance, effort, improvement or insight. The subject of praise could influence whether the motivation is extrinsic or intrinsic. At different points in learning the nature and source of motivation may itself undergo development. The role of motivation is an important feedback potential, since if the learner is not engaged in the learning and involved in his or her own progress, learning is not at optimum levels.

Feedback can power learning as a motivator of future action as “...*it makes you want to participate, actually*” (Harri/ TLT 2/Int.<sup>16</sup>). Here, Harri refers to oral feedback to group activity, where the feedback from the leader of the learning made it appear interesting and puzzling. She is motivated to engage in the learning since “*somehow the feedback makes it interesting to go back, it motivates me to think about it again*” (Harri/

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<sup>16</sup> Code for Data – TLT – Teacher Leader trainee, Int. – Interview data

TLT 3/Int.). Written feedback can also engage the group or the individual in ‘worrying’ at an interesting idea. Jo sees the dialogue of a seminar mirrored in written feedback, as *“I suppose it’s motivation as well...you know, someone is interested in your ideas and how you’ve tackled it so it’s worth spending time on”* (Jo/ TLT 2/Int.). A way of thinking to which she has been enculturated during seminars and face-to-face experiences, is now represented in a different medium.

In relation to cycles of feedback on the same learning context, Jo talks about how without feedback she wouldn’t feel motivated to keep working on something when she has handed it in before. Why should she go back to it and refine it? She has entered a partnership when she hands in work and receives feedback. The reciprocal nature of this is demonstrated by Trainers in that they give worth and value to her ideas and appear to engage in them, so she is drawn into developing the work further. This again links to the purposeful way in which Trainers use feedback to give value to ideas.

Precisely how an individual makes personal meaning of motivation is complex and somewhat inaccessible due to its uniquely constructed and fluctuating nature. For example, Charlie responds that she regards dealing with feedback and acting on feedback, a challenge as *“(feedback) made me determined”* (Charlie/ TLT1/Int.). Feedback that praises is not always universally motivating (Charlie/ TLT4/Int.). Feedback, which suggests that all challenges in that learning have been easily achieved, is not universally motivating with regard to future activity. It would seem for some that for some learners suggesting alternative ways to both undertake and conceptualise the task is highly motivating. Motivation is referred to in the data in many different ways, often using subtly different terms related to

how it makes them act following the feedback. This may indicate that motivating factors may be responded to both consciously and unconsciously.

Feedback processes in this professional learning environment seem to aim to provide a highly motivational environment. This is a challenging goal for leaders of the learning because "one size does not fit all". Each TL trainee has an emotional, cognitive, and experiential profile that activates and directs behaviour and response. It is possible that what motivates one learner may de-motivate another. For example, some TL trainee participants continued to need external validation for longer than others, to maintain levels of motivation. This suggests that more powerful and uniquely designed feedback is possible only when the leaders of the learning have known the learner across time and in a variety of contexts.

However, motivation seems to have become intrinsic through the use of feedback. Feedback gave the TL trainees a sense of efficacy in their activity during the course, as recorded in the course evaluations. When asked how she knew how she was doing, Kym reflected on the role of feedback to tell her what she was doing well at (Kym/CE spring/Obs.<sup>17</sup>). She was also able to use *"specific praise on specifically what I have done well at.....you know you're important in this ..you know where you are, and where you are going"* ( Kym /TLT3/Int.), as an important point of reference for identifying what still needed to be considered and affirming that progress is being made. Kym found obvious differences in feedback on a continued activity<sup>18</sup> motivating and self-affirming when, *" Yes, I look at it the first time.....I know I have moved on and that feels good and I know I have moved on"*(Kym/TLT4/Int.). This comment

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<sup>17</sup> Data codes – CE – Course Evaluation, Obs. – Observation data

<sup>18</sup> A case study is handed in for evaluation and feedback given several times over the first few months of the course.



suggests that the ‘flow’ attained by involving learners in their own patterns of learning does indeed allow them to experience pleasure from their own improvements and to use this as motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, this also suggests that learners whose self-confidence is less robust and whose ability to use feedback to inform self-evaluations is less developed may experience low levels of motivation following feedback (Bono & Colbert, 2005). I will develop this idea in Chapter Six.

Feedback’s potential as a motivating force was constructed as a cultural model for personal professional practice. Harri identified an aspect from which she benefited when she talked about how *“I knew I wanted to acknowledge them .....all their previous work, because they would have mulled it over for a while”* (Harri /TLT3/Int.), when preparing a feedback document for teachers’ Observation Summary tasks<sup>19</sup>. Her own experience enabled her to decide feedback content when practising generating these tasks for the first time. Harri was clearly undertaking acknowledgement to a teacher as a pedagogical decision as opposed to a conceptual understanding of the role of acknowledging effort, and went on to refer to how her own experiences had shown her that it felt good to be acknowledged. Harri is a TL trainee and it may be that her construct of acknowledging reflects a lower level of appropriation than will be the case when she moves into the professional role itself.

The data held a range of more complex and refined insights into feedback as praise being motivational. TLs were aware of potential risk of making the receiver of the feedback feeling ‘*reduced to rubble*’ (Beryl/ExpTL/Int.<sup>20</sup>) by the

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<sup>19</sup> TL trainees prepare written feedback to assessment tasks and teaching activity during the professional preparation course

<sup>20</sup> Data codes – ExpTL – experienced TL participant, Int. – interview data

experience were seen in the interview data. Helen also reflects on how amount of feedback impacts on motivation. Too much can make the learner focus on all that remains to do rather than appreciating what has already been achieved. *“I was once observed for a whole morning's teaching and given feedback for a whole afternoon. Some of the feedback was good but lost its impact after an hour or so. I learned that feedback should be pertinent and concise”* (Helen/ ExpTL/Int.). She used her own experiences to construct a personal guideline for making feedback motivational.

However, TLs' perception of feedback as motivational was not confined to a low-level behavioural reinforcement. The reward can come from the satisfaction of knowing you can move forward (Iris/ExpTL /Int.). Iris described how her own experiences helped her think about ensuring that she enabled the teachers observing one of their colleagues teach for a 'live lesson critique'<sup>21</sup> to provide peer feedback which motivated intrinsically. She talked about giving feedback that enabled feed forward for both RR teacher and child's learning.

Experienced TLs recognised the potential plummets in confidence when undergoing a learning experience, which requires change at many levels.

*“Personally – I needed encouragement to keep going, to know that some strides were being made, even if it didn't feel like it at the time...I needed that in the feedback”* (Carol/Exp TL/Int.).

Feedback *“makes the process of ongoing learning feel dynamic and fresh each time. When engaged in learning in this way I feel able to challenge my own thinking and motivate my continued learning”* (Carol/ExpTL/Int.). Carol is referring to the motivational aspects of feedback and how it promotes ongoing and continued learning. She also seems to hint at internal feedback mechanisms and how they are powered up by motivating

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<sup>21</sup> This refers to the observation of a RR lesson involving a teacher and child and the reflective discussions conducted by others whilst viewing.

external feedback. Experienced TLs may have had more refined concepts of feedback as a motivator, which may reflect appropriation at a conceptual level. Feedback seems to have acted as a motivator to continue learning and involve the learner to continue to put effort into activity (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992 cited in Garris et al., 2002). This corresponds with ideas of reinforcement and whilst motivational aspects may remain essential to powerful feedback, the level at which motivation is engendered may not stay the same. What is perceived or felt as motivational may be growing in complexity and cultural embeddedness along with the learning itself. It would seem likely that if a learner is not engaged and motivated then the rate of learning will be constrained, and therefore feedback would be less powerful.

The next section considers how feedback may inform the Trainer, the leader of the learning in this environment.

### *System of exchange*

Another feedback potential is to act as a system of information exchange. This would apply equally to both written and practical activity. Feedback opportunities act as a monitoring system for teaching and are in part reflections of teaching the TL trainees have received. Repeated hand-in cycles are a reflection of a combination of previous teaching and the effectiveness of prior feedback. This exchange of information seems to be important in several ways. It provides a process by which future teaching action can be regularly adjusted to suit cognition. Feedback effect can also be monitored in order to adjust further feedback information. It is also a process by which the developing concept of the feedback process is observed. This is achieved by including seminars where

feedback to written activity is overtly discussed to make meaning of information and process. In feedback processes surrounding practical activity, the co-construction of dialogue process allows development of conceptual understanding of feedback to be evaluated.

The assessment processes were used to shape and direct future teaching so could be said to have bi-directional influence and suggest a social constructionist nature. For example, after evaluating and feeding back on a piece of reflective writing, a Trainer reports to colleagues that a TL trainee *“has reflected upon what helped raise her confidence across the year but not related it to the TL role”*(Tina/Research Journal/EMAIL3/June<sup>22</sup>). This identifies for Trainer colleagues that aspects of the task evaluated have not been fully understood by one of the learners. The Trainer then goes on to think about how this might reflect the planning for future learning (Tina/Research Journal/EMAIL3/June). Feedback is functioning as a dynamic assessment system shaping and evolving common cultural understandings about learning in this group. It considers not only the learning outcomes, but also the route that learning will have to take for these outcomes to be achieved. This two-way influence shapes the opportunities that feedback provides and is also seen in feedback to practical activity. The example above (Tina/Research Journal/EMAIL3/June) demonstrates that feedback had created an exchange of information between the learner (TL trainee) and leader of the learning (the Trainer). This in turn allowed Trainer-insight into levels of understanding that would not have been possible if feedback information was not being created and exchanged in a meaningful and relevant context.

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<sup>22</sup> Data Codes – Research Journal – this maintained notes and records of naturally occurring interactions and communications.

A Trainer considers how the co-constructive dialogue after supporting TL trainees at a field visit has identified something that needs to be integrated *“into our working with trainees between now and the end of the year especially for teaching sessions at IOE”* (Tess/Research Journal/EMAIL3/May). She then identifies that the TL trainees may need additional experience of *“reviewing the teacher introduction as material for predicting what might be profitable learning opportunities (particularly in respect of the focus) and then deliberately looking for them to occur. Then being ready to run with them (dog with bone!) until they achieve, with the group, the insight they are after”* (Tess/Research Journal/EMAIL3/May).

The personalisation of feedback is achieved through this reciprocal process. TL participants were also aware that their personal experiences of feedback could be used to shape future instruction. *“Trainers would listen to what we were struggling with and feed that into the feedback”* (Frances/ExpTL/Int.). Frances reflects on how her concept of feedback processes underwent reformation during the TL preparation course. This in turn has been transformed into ways of managing learning for others. She views this as mutually beneficial since *“I think I was better placed to engage in the process. Giving and receiving were both instrumental in how I learned”* (Ann/ExpTL/Int). Being both a recipient and giver of feedback in the training context increased awareness of how the process itself could work, since *“I think that my learning about and use of feedback has supported my work”* and *“has changed the way I think about the relationship between myself and teachers”* (Beryl/ExpTL/Int). Beryl’s concept of the role of feedback and its role in learning has changed and she now uses this experience in her conceptualisation of how instructional relationships should work *“to have teachers engaged in the process so that they understand the way in which feedback is designed to support their learning”* (Klaus/ExpTL/Int). The concept of bi-directional movement

of information was linked to TL understandings of individual differentiation in the learning environments they went on to construct. Experienced TLs would try to *“monitor my feedback to ensure it is both constructive and constructed in a way to encourage the teacher to take on new learning/ understandings and further their own reflection on their teaching”* (Frances/ExpTL/Int).

Frances’s experiences have *“taught me the value of two-way discussion and how this has helped me to learn more about the way others think. It is easy to assume that you know what a person is thinking but often it is enlightening to discover the reason why a teacher has done something and can lead to learning experience for me as a TL, as well as the group. This is important in my role as teacher-leader; facilitator of discussion, shaping the feedback to deepen the understanding of myself and others”* (Frances/ExpTL/Int). Feedback in this context is not a static entity; it reflects and grows with the learner. Harri perceives that the feedback process is constantly developing to keep pace with her own progress when she says *“we are the work you are looking at really. I mean, we are the case studies”* (Harri/TLT4/Int). She sees aspects of self as under construction as well as the activity being evaluated.

The system of information exchange represented more than effective communication. In addition to information used to reflect on prior teaching and adjust future teaching, it also allowed the on-going interaction with TL awareness of feedback processes as used to how feedback practices is being understood, made meaning of, used for further learning and learned for future use. The next section considers the power of feedback to speed development.

### *Accelerator*

The purpose of engaging in formative assessment using feedback processes is to have an effect on learning. One way in which it might have an effect is to increase the pace of, or accelerate, the learning. By this I mean that by focusing the learner on aspects of activity going well and identifying clear areas for further reflection and adaptation, the learner will learn quicker than if initially left to determine ways forward independently. This idea would seem to be important in early stages of the course, as if by increasing the opportunities to experience feedback, the learner is taken to a stage of being able to critically reflect more quickly. I separate the functions of motivator and accelerator because they are achieved in different ways and have differing effects. I view the feedback role of increasing pace of learning as being the result of feedback focused on the cognitive needs of the individual and so maybe an additional benefit of feedback working as a bi-directional system of information exchange. Therefore, I see this role for feedback as more complex and interactive than providing motivation alone. In addition, this role of feedback may be temporary. Learners will always need to be motivated to learn, but a state of acceleration will not continue beyond the course duration itself and may not be necessary in the later stages of the course.

Feedback seems to act as an accelerator of learning. At each feedback point, there is the potential to “*speed up my learning process*” (Harri/TLT 3/Int.). TL trainees also understood that feedback could drive their learning forward. All the TL trainees will have had feedback on professional learning before, yet responses during the latter part of the academic year indicate that the accelerative nature of the feedback in this learning context was a surprise to them. This would indicate

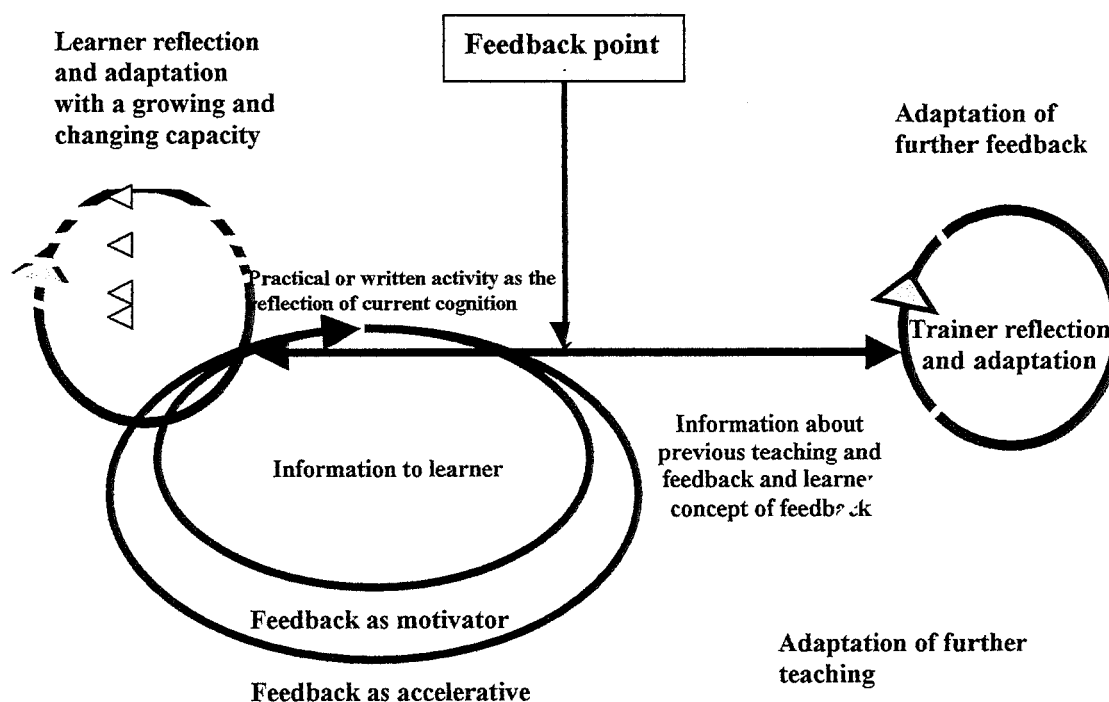
that it now felt different from previously experienced feedback processes, acting as a speeded route to further action and reflection. Feedback was understood to act as if *“people are pushing you that little step further”* (Jo/TLT4/Int.). This ‘pushing’ *“help(s) me to take something to the next level, move my thinking on”* (Kym/TLT3 /Int.). It also increases the pace of learning, as *“it has made me move so far.....in a very short space of time, I think”* (Kym/TLT4/Int.). This constructed meaning may have been due to the nature of feedback and the cycles of hand-in for feedback opportunities. These cycles may have kept the learning focussed and directed at goals, thus supporting a perception of movement increasing in pace towards those goals. Linked to this may be the increased frequency of dialogue as feedback, which fed forward to future academic and professional activity. It may have given the feeling of feedback always being focused on the future, and hence accelerative.

This learning acceleration may also be an indicator of the power of feedback processes that move in tandem with the individual learner and their interface with curriculum experiences. It may also indicate that as the learner becomes cognizant of the formative assessment process and how to use it to drive learning, so the pace of learning quickens. Knowing *‘both sides of the operation’* (Sadler, 1998, p. 78) may mean that self-evaluation can be used in addition to the dialogue that planned feedback instances provide. This feeling of being propelled by two forces may also explain the learners’ sense that learning was increasing in pace. This underlines the previous conclusion that the quality and ensuing power of feedback is dependent on the accessibility (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and how it is motivational to continued effort.



The sections above have described how feedback gives information about the learning, the task and about the criteria for evaluation and therefore increases the pace of learning. I next consider how motivation, information exchange and acceleration may interact.

Reciprocal movement of information is reminiscent of the feedback loops of Roos and Hamilton, (2004), as discussed in Chapter Two. However, the idea of looped structures cannot fully explain that the learner (and the nature of learning) has changed between feedback points, as demonstrated in the feedback examples. Therefore the information may have returned to its original source but the source itself (the learner) has changed. Some sort of recursive and reciprocal movement is occurring, with the learner's starting point for communication and reflection becoming increasingly complex at each point of planned feedback. The figure below demonstrates how motivation, acceleration, information exchange and influence may occur between Trainers and TL trainees.



*Figure 6: The potential of feedback*

The model demonstrates that TL trainees develop evolving knowledge bases through interactions with others. The activity acting as focus for the formative feedback is the product of current cognition about task and approaches to doing the task. The effects of a bi-directional movement of feedback add to explanations of the accelerative effect felt by the TL trainees. In this way, feedback processes ensure that Trainers continually produce optimum opportunities to engage in feedback and hence learning how to learn. Learning always directed at the point where change is immediate may feel as if acceleration of learning is occurring.

Feedback caused learning to occur at an accelerative pace. The next section presents how feedback was structured to keep in step with the changing needs of the TL trainee learners and keep learning goals to the fore.

### ***Feedback Strategies***

The written feedback examples to, transcribed observations of, and interviews with, TL trainees and Trainers revealed a number of deliberate and planned teaching strategies<sup>23</sup>, or tools employed in feedback processes to encourage active thinking and participation, and aimed at promoting higher order thinking and critical reflection. Within the data analysis processes, these strategies were identified, initially described and grouped, then tested against the data examples to explore how Trainers seemed to use feedback processes to respond to the learner.

In this study context, use of case studies facilitated frequent cycles of feedback which demonstrate a spiral curriculum linking theory and practice. Also, case

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<sup>23</sup> Tools and strategies refer to the same level of function and are used interchangeably in this study. Many different tools make up the constructionist learning process.

studies present opportunities to learn from being an insider and to engage in realistic and meaningful problem-solving. Using case studies to integrate written and practical activity facilitates an extending loop-like structure with the potential to expand and deepen learning (Mustoe & Croft, 1999). Written feedback was given to both draft and final tasks. Case study tasks therefore had a series of hand-in points, as the file resource for writing reports<sup>24</sup> grows and increases in complexity. Practical activity to teaching of children and working with RR teacher-training groups also stimulated feedback dialogue, which grew in complexity in similar ways to written activity. Feedback points are incidents along the planned learning cycles, each moving from action to reflection and then returning to action, but transformed in some way by the feedback dialogue. The dialogue (written or oral) to promote learning has several functions, pointing to the complexity of the learning happening in this interplay of theory as rationale for practice.

Within the three feedback capacities described above<sup>25</sup>, distinct feedback tools were identified being used responsively. Using the constant comparative method (see Chapter Three) they became identified as *Directing*, *Acknowledging*, *Mirroring*, *Visioning*, *Probing* and *Feeding Forward*. Complexity was variable amongst the six categories in terms of learner action and cultural embeddedness, with ‘*Directing*’ being the least complex and ‘*Feeding Forward*’ being the most complex. I begin with the least complex form, ‘*Directing*’.

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<sup>24</sup> The case study activity and the case studies themselves become the resource for writing a series of reports for differing audiences; an academic journal; a report to the child’s school; and a reflective report on how the case study and associated activity contributed to learning (see Appendix 4).

<sup>25</sup> The three feedback capacities are motivator, system of information exchange and accelerator.

### *Directing*

As the characterization suggests, this produces low-level information, which clearly and specifically indicates a practical action. In the example of the case study activity, the aim is to make the case-file resource work for its purpose of a real-life reflective context. ‘*Directing*’ is used most frequently at initial hand-in and diminishes, though continually observed in written feedback data. For example, it can direct an inclusion, sometimes in the files organisation, “*You will need a title page for next hand-in*”, (Tessa/WF~YCS~Nov~ to Harri). ‘*Directing*’ is a low level practical action which either directs attention to academic conventions or directs summative organisational techniques even during the report writing activity ‘*Directing*’ remained low level as the thinking and reflecting by the TL trainee had already occurred (Tessa/WF~YCS~draft reports~ to Kym). ‘*Directing*’ in practical activity took the form of giving clear information about surface behaviours such as “*you need two pens of the same colour*” (Tracy/FT Nov./Obs<sup>26</sup>). ‘*Directing*’ alone was uncommon in practical activity, probably due to the co-constructive nature of the dialogue. Generally, a directing comment would be followed by an extended dialogue of some of the rationales behind the statement, and then finding possible links in the teaching reference guide.<sup>27</sup>

‘*Directing*’ could be seen to have motivational aspects since it prevents wasting time on misunderstandings at a time when cultural understandings are under formation. The learner can respond to direct instructions and feel a measure of success in this learning environment. It could also be interpreted as a tool for forcing the pace of learning since the length of time taken with low level,

<sup>26</sup> Data codes – WF – written feedback, YCS – case study with RR pupil, FT oral feedback to teaching, Obs – Observation data.

<sup>27</sup> A Guidebook for Teachers in training in Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993)

secretarial conventions is minimised and enables the learner to begin operating at a higher level faster, the level at which reflection on and in action would begin. Clearly, in both instances the feedback remains at a low level of power. The information could be seen as having bi-directional potential since having to provide clear direction has informed the leader of the learning that the learner was not able to produce this insight independently at this point.

### *Acknowledging*

Another feedback strategy acknowledges aspects of the work or effort made. All forms of feedback could be said to be '*Acknowledging*' activity, both written and practical, and could be verbalised as effort or time taken and may have direct links to maintaining levels of engagement and motivation. However, comments interpreted here as '*Acknowledging*' do not refer to effort alone, but also to aspects of the specific activity. For example, organisation of the case study file is acknowledged at early hand-in points. Examples taken from written feedback to the first hand in point when the file contents are being gathered and organised.

*"You have clearly labelled your file contents and divided it into sections."*

(Tina/WF~YCS~ to Charlie)

*"This case study file is beginning to take shape."*

*"Coloured dividers clearly separate file sections"*

*" Good to see that you've begun a contents list."*

(Tilly/WF~YCS~to Harri)

As the case study resource is built, clear, organising examples that will resource writing at a later stage are acknowledged. This is superseded by more sophisticated objectives for the learning, but '*Acknowledging*' clearly marks the activity as being important for the potential critical reflection to come.

*'Acknowledging'* sometimes shapes background information to recognize the value of the activity to the goals of the RR literacy intervention. The activity being acknowledged refers to the *"excellent job of beginning to source a case study. You have included a range of information about Aaron leading to his inclusion in Reading Recovery"*<sup>28</sup>. *Well done!"* (Tina/WF~YCS~ to Charlie).

Similarly, the comments made in the example below acknowledge how Harri has *"gathered some very useful information about Jordan prior to being identified for the Reading Recovery programme"* (Tess/WF~YCS~Nov~to Harri).

The insight being acknowledged concerns how background information may be relevant for the child's learning at this point in time and may be important to consider as the TL trainees reflect on the precise individual nature of the teaching. Though critical reflection on how far the teaching supports individual learning needs continues to be an important aspect to the record keeping, this form of acknowledgement was firmly located in the reporting of context details so seems less sophisticated than on-going adaptation of teaching through observation. However, the sequence of acknowledgement moves on to recognise and reflect on all the documents portraying how the child is responding to teaching and the moves the teaching makes to follow the learner - the learner/teacher interface. Sourcing the description of this interface is a more sophisticated process than sorting and sifting for relevance since it puts together not only the observations and subsequent recording of what the child does in response to text, word, sub-word and letter stimuli, but also how the role of the teacher and the teaching interaction influences the child's responses.

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<sup>28</sup> The information has been developed to lead from initial concerns about the child and his learning to a point where he was identified for a place in RR.

The complexity of the mental activity is being acknowledged, as the “*capturing much reading and writing behaviour of J in your comments section*” (Tina/WF~Nov~to Jo) and therefore ‘*Acknowledging*’ is used with the intent of perpetuating this activity and marking it as important.

As the TL trainees begin to produce more observant and insightful lesson records, running records of reading behaviour and oral critiques of learning behaviour, ‘*Acknowledging*’ also shifts focus, keeping in step both with the increasing observational acuity and knowledge base. Then the records (or oral critiques) themselves are used to become critically reflective of TL trainee’s own practice and to critique the learner/teacher interface. These attempts are acknowledged so that the learner will both continue to produce critically reflective records and increase the amount of critical reflection on their own theories of child and of literacy learning (Tilly/WF~Nov~to Harri).

‘*Acknowledging*’ extends to placing value on how a real life experience is used to illustrate a theoretical understandings or to exemplar a viewpoint. This level of thinking and action is acknowledged in draft and final submission of the reports on the case study and associated teaching and assessment activity. This suggests that the final outcome of the case study activity demands that experience, reflection, knowledge and theoretical knowledge are synthesised to communicate effectively in the styles of academic writing, reflective writing, writing for a teacher practitioner and reflecting on practice (see Appendix 11 for details of case study assessment task). At the point in time that the three case study reports are being worked on, ‘*Acknowledging*’ is used to applaud conceptual ideas about the task which allow for effective communication of teaching and learning activity in RR in the different reporting styles (Tess/WF/ YCS draft reports/ to Kym).

Oral feedback dialogue typically opened with ‘*Acknowledging*’ early in the course. In the case of teaching a child, this might take the form of comments on progress so far (Tess/WF to teaching/to Kym) or a relationship supporting a sensitive or difficult child. Feedback to the tutoring of teachers, despite being two thirds of the way through the course began with acknowledgement of all the positive aspects of performance. “*You did a great job of getting the (the teachers) talking*” (Tilly/Ftu/April/Obs/to Kym)<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, ‘*Acknowledging*’ identifies and values community ways of thinking and acting which may contribute to the learner’s active process of enculturation in RR practices, however sophisticated or embedded the activity.

The interviews with TL trainees indicated that the lived experience of receiving feedback had indeed made them feel acknowledged. Endorsement in the form of positive feedback serves to fulfil a sense of value and demonstrates interest in the learner. Jo began the series of interviews knowing that being endorsed was going to be important to her as she “*always preferred it when they took the time to give some indication of where to go ...it was somehow more personal, acknowledged the effort I had made and so much more helpful*” (Jo/TLT1/Int). Jo was the only TLT trainee that reflected this sort of need at the initial interview, but as the year progressed, the other TL trainees began to reflect that when they were working so hard, one of the things they looked for and affected how they felt about their feedback was a sense of acknowledgement and recognition of “*what you say. Whatever we are working on there is always feedback. It makes you want to participate actually, more than that, it makes you relaxed about going out on a limb.... think outside the box*” (Harri/TLT2/Int). External

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<sup>29</sup> Data codes – Ftu – oral feedback to tutoring activity, Obs. – observation data.



validation had varying degrees of importance to the TL trainees, generally diminishing in importance as the course went on.

Acknowledgement remained of importance to experienced TLs, as *“the praise I received at my first screen session<sup>30</sup> certainly encouraged me to go on and try to improve in the areas where I was weaker”* (Eve/ExpTL/Int). Eve refers to acknowledgement as being motivational, providing her with information about the aspects she has been successful with. The motivation is still externally constructed. Similarly, feedback that is accelerative focuses on positive aspects of performance and so narrows the chances of spending time and energy on unprofitable activity.

However, it remains at a low level.

Feedback can acknowledge but also provide a more refined perspective without naming specific action needed to ‘close the gap’.

### *‘Mirroring’*

*‘Mirroring’* had the function of demonstrating to the learner an external interpretation of activity. For example, feedback could reflect back to the learner the current communication of their work, but the actions required to improve this outcome are not given. For example, one *‘Mirroring’* comment pointed out that *“They (weekly reflections) are focused almost entirely on what Aaron did”* (Tess/WF~YCS~ to Charlie). There is a degree of cultural coding implied here, as this statement could be interpreted as being positive if one was unaware that within this learning community, the reflections need to be subjective as well as evaluative of the learner (in this case a child). The role of *‘Mirroring’* is to make clear that there is a gap but entrusts the individual to identify and take the action

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<sup>30</sup> This refers to the first time of working with teachers at the one-way screen, to stimulate and shape critically reflective dialogue.

needed to fill that gap. It suggests that some change will need to occur, and is therefore more challenging to the learner than acknowledgement alone.

Frequency of '*Mirroring*' increases after the first feedback point. Content and language increasingly suggest that some level of cultural knowledge is expected in order to be able to use the feedback for learning. Feedback is now clearly the product of shared goals and perspectives. The learner is trusted to review the feedback comments and construct a way forward. This could be seen as externally motivating, but more importantly it presents further reflection and activity as within the scope of the learner and reflects the feeling of 'moving on' that was found to be motivational evidence for the learner. '*Mirroring*' in practical activity took the form of 'replaying' the teaching or tutoring action, most commonly to dialogue around how the events might have supported the learners (children or teachers). '*Mirroring*' to both written and practical activity makes clear there is a gap. The more reflective and communicative elements of feedback become a higher priority when a conceptual aspect of the task is articulated.

### *'Visioning'*

Feedback information often communicates something about how the case study resource or activity is leading towards a future development. '*Visioning*' is used for building the independence with which learners can develop early written drafts, or adjust teaching actions (with both children and adults). This is achieved by not leading to any suggested action but to elaborating on the goals and practical utility of the task (Tina/WF~Nov~to Harri: Tess/WF~Nov~to Kym). This would seem to be helpful in shaping the way that the TL trainee approaches

the task in future as it relates both to theory and goals of the assignment. The *'Visioning'* seems to correspond to the intrinsic motivation felt as one contemplates that much has been achieved. I also link *'Visioning'* with projecting forward how this learning is connected to the end result of the activity, within the lifetime of the course or as part of the future professional role. It has accelerative potential in that it gives clear information that directs action toward the activity product that can be used to 'fast track' further action.

*'Visioning'* may help develop generative thinking; i.e. 'this is a way that it might be helpful to think about an instance like this', rather than a practical direction that is context specific. Therefore it usually follows a comment which implies there is more to be done, a *'Mirroring'* or a *'Directing'* comment, or, as I discuss next, a question to promote further reflection.

### *'Probing'*

A frequently occurring strategy to achieve higher cognition poses questions. The questions are focussed on changing the thinking surrounding activity and therefore are intended to promote further thinking about how a particular aspect of the learning goal might be achieved. For example, the written feedback given to Jo in December drew her attention to evaluating children's oral language competence when the question "On what basis did you make this judgement? Did you do ROL<sup>31</sup> on Jordan way back in October?" (Tess/WF~YCS~Dec~to Jo) was posed. This call for further evidence of reflection-based decision-making is also seen in questions that ask TL trainees to return to task specifications to think about what the contents of their activity should be. Whilst there is a definitive answer to the

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<sup>31</sup> Record of Oral language Clay et al 1983. This was a piece of background information the TL trainees were to use as part of the picture of the learner before inclusion in Reading Recovery.

question above, it points to a more generative skill: calling for evidenced reflection, not only on teaching and learning decisions but to use the case file as a resource for that reflection. This again is interpreted as accelerative, as it asks questions directed at identifying a gap. The nature of the 'gap' for each of learners will be different and is further evidence of the bi-directional potential of feedback opportunities. Feedback to practical activity also used probes. "*How does our observation help us think about the challenge of learning letters?*" (Tess/FT/Jan/to Jo). 'Probing' is also a more complex tool than previous examples because it demands the learner to make links from many sources, not just the activity currently being focused on. It also requires inference to guide future action. It seems to act as a conceptual tool in this environment.

To give feedback to something, which hasn't happened and is not yet required is more complex still.

### *'Feeding forward'*

The most frequent strategy across the feedback examples in the latter third of the academic year is '*Feeding forward*'. This impacts on two key aspects of learning; (i) it engenders a concept of continually refining our knowledge and how we reflect upon that knowledge; and (ii) it helps scaffold future attempts at the task so increasing the power of the feedback by adding to the report back on what has been done, acknowledging key learning as the curriculum progresses. It also combines a view of what is possible for the learner and how it might be achieved.

The aim is that Jo would be inspired to increase the scope of recording observations and reflections in daily literacy lessons, as it would help her construct insights for future activity. "*It would be good to work towards recording*

*information on what you did and what happened as a result. This aspect can be built on as you reflect more on the process of capturing useful observations alongside the sessions on effective running records and lesson records and how to use them"* (Tracy/WF~YCS~Dec-to Jo). *'Feeding forward'* seems to require many sorts of understanding in this context, at the practical, organisational and conceptual level. In the context of practical activity, identifying the action needed to fill the gap is taken to a dialogue by means of the three higher level tools, *'Visioning'*, *'Probing'* and *'Feeding forward'*. The shift towards feedback working for higher cognition came earlier in time than in the written feedback. This might indicate that as experienced teachers of children, a concept of the potential of feedback in this context and an openness to its effects were likely to be already in place. It might also indicate that as the dialogue was co-constructed and TL trainees were able to respond and reason aloud, this was an ideal context in which to begin the shift towards more complex tools, which were more intrinsically motivating and culturally coded. Viewed in this way, feedback design also considered the context in which challenge was likely to be seen as motivational. Beginning with the most fruitful context for learning from feedback can also be interpreted as accelerative. In terms of bi-directional movement of information, the experience of sharing tutoring and teaching experiences with TL trainees gave multiple opportunities to learn from the dialogue and therefore adjust planning for learning experiences. Feedback to practical activity also had many opportunities for considering how feedback was currently conceptualised as a process for learning. The motivation provided by feedback of this complexity involves a complex projection of future 'self'; the learner as future TL, undertaking some of the actions with their own teacher groups. This also has capacity for increasing the pace of learning since it brings into play the role of other sources, in this case RR

teachers in training, to give sources of feedback to evaluate personal performance. The analysis above presents feedback as a process using some key strategies, some with local and immediate action, some deepening conceptual knowledge and guiding decision-making (Polin, 1992). They have the aim of involving the learner in their own learning, so the learner can remain self-motivated and self-endorsing. This it does by learner-unique patterns of ‘*Directing*’ action, ‘*Acknowledging*’, ‘*Mirroring*’, ‘*Visioning*’, ‘*Probing*’ and ‘*Feeding forward*’ as somewhat of a progression of complexity in this order. ‘*Acknowledgement*’, although on the surface at a lower level, is always present, though in more refined and task embedded comment, so can still be seen as gaining in complexity somewhat. The way that the tools are used developmentally, as an individual match, exemplifies spirals of feedback that are instrumental in moving the learning forward. Data from the feedback examples demonstrate this developmental use in each feedback context.

In the case of practical activity, feedback information was co-constructed through dialogue, where “*part of that feedback construction is shared ..less of a power imbalance...*” (Charlie/TLT~3/Int). Feedback dialogue around practical activity had an opportunity for the TL trainee to articulate something that (s)he wanted help with. This varied tremendously across the examples observed, from ‘*just anything you think would help me*’ (Jo/FT/Obs.), to very specific ideas related to the child’s literacy functioning or theoretical ideas of literacy acquisition, or related to the tutoring of adults. “*I’ve been thinking about getting the teachers somewhere...you know, lifting them. Can you help me think about the steps to that and how I tried to do that?*” (Kym/Ftu/April/Obs). Generally, as the extent of feedback experience increased, so did the complexity and involvement of this personal view of assistance needed.

As discussed above, this relates to the external validation judged to be needed when undertaking a new form of assessment activity.

The feedback responsiveness works the same way in both practical and written contexts, with practical activity being focused on *“all about helping them make teaching more effective, though now the goal was the child”* (Charlie/TLT4/Int.), or in the case of working with teacher groups, the teachers. The described feedback from both real-life and case study contexts provides both tacit and explicit knowledge for the learner. The task is the context through which current knowledge is transformed in some way to produce either a written or real-life example of that heightened knowledge. Feedback is therefore seminal to the assessment process itself. The development from more explicit feedback tools, for example ‘*Directing*’ towards the conceptual and culturally-bound tools of ‘*Visioning*’, ‘*Probing*’ and ‘*Feeding Forward*’ suggests that teachers in this context may not initially know how to interpret feedback and use it for learning (Sadler, 1998). Feedback dialogue seem to act as mediation between the learners and the substantive body of knowledge and cultural practice by acculturating the learners in both the language and practices of feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Knowledge of the vocabulary, knowledge and concepts available to each learner at each given feedback point is crucial to the effective use of the feedback process. Feedback used a referent, as Sadler (1998) suggests. The referent may not be concrete, for example task objectives, but may be based on analysis of the current learner. This analysis included within-learner factors and a knowledge of contributing learning experiences. This would indicate that the assessment process itself can be communicated through feedback, in addition to information about the task and actions necessary to complete that task (O’Donovan et al.,

2004). The move from simple to complex would suggest that the feedback processes respond to an observed change in the quality of learner and learning. The feedback response might potentially motivate or accelerate at any point across the building complexity of the combination of feedback devices. There is always bi-directional potential to feedback, either from the information gained from the actual evaluation, or from the points across the year at which seminars discuss feedback and its impact on the group's learning.

The figure below (Figure 7) demonstrates the movement along the three continua of feedback as motivational and accelerative and an exchange of information. It illustrates the power of feedback as accelerator, motivator and with potential for shaping future learning, influencing the growing complexity of feedback devices. The combination of strategies used in the feedback information develops in tandem with learner needs and is used developmentally for each learner. Learners in the same environment may be at different points of the continua at the same point in time. Therefore, feedback will be responsive to individual needs.



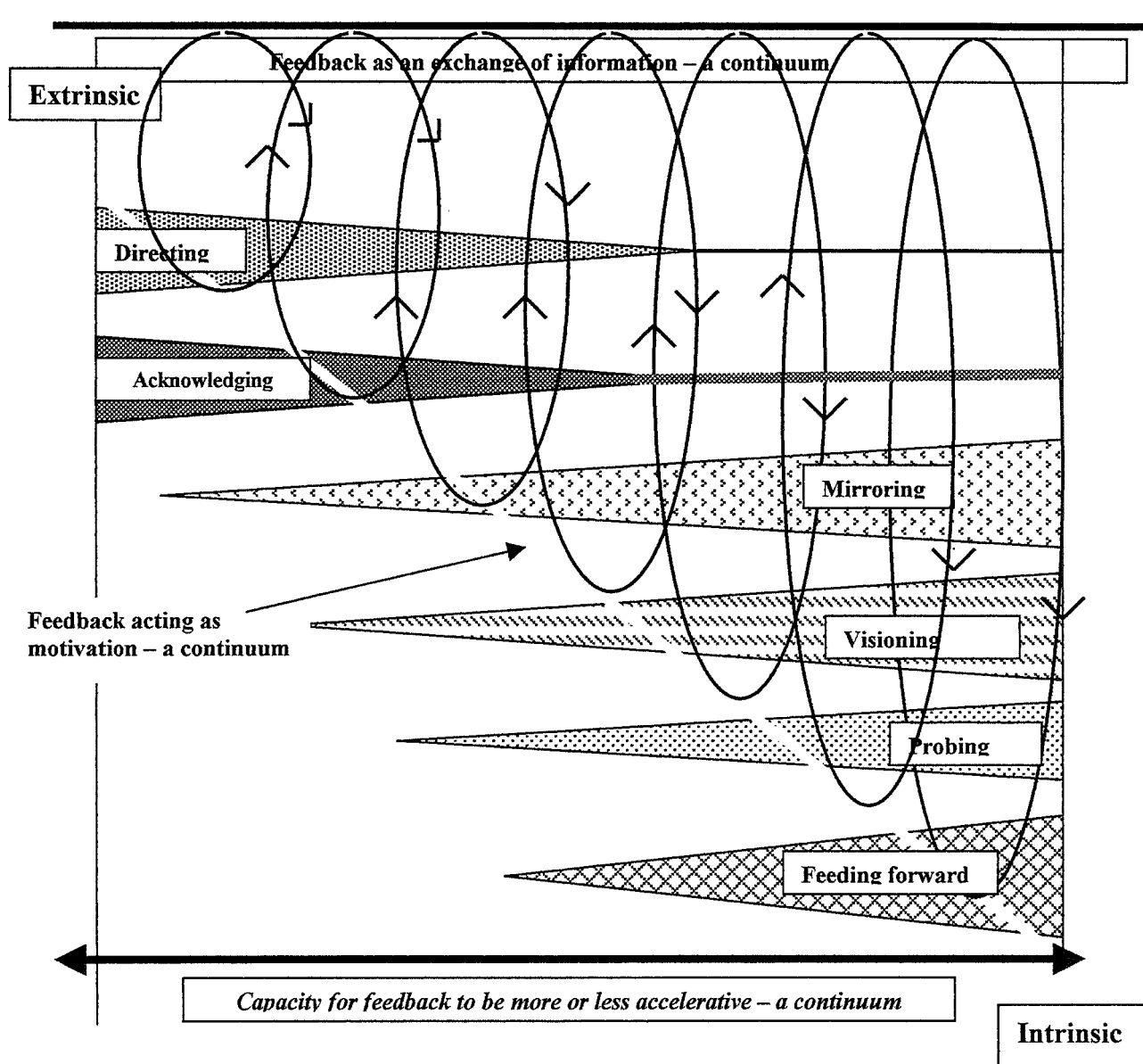


Figure 7: Movement along the three continua using the six feedback strategies

If the task-performance and awareness of the assessment process itself are developing, the feedback is a reflection of those changes as perceived by leaders of the learning. This would suggest that appropriation of some of the concepts of feedback is occurring amongst the learners, in this case, TL trainees (Wertsch, 1991). The dialogic nature of feedback seen in the 'Visioning', 'Probing' and 'Feeding forward' strategies suggest that a model of internal or self-initiated feedback is being demonstrated. These more complex tools may become adapted by the individual to inform 'internal feedback' (Costa & Kallick, 1995, see

Chapter Two). Feedback in this context changes, reflecting the learner. Therefore, the model of feedback in this context puts the learner at the centre, actively engaged by making connections, building mental schemata and developing new concepts from previous understandings. Feedback itself is designed to encourage the development of paths of internal feedback. Therefore the external and planned feedback constructed by the assessment system of the learning environment can add power to the learning by creating increasingly insightful self-feedback systems. This is important in professional learning contexts, since the leader of the learning will not be there to provide feedback essential to continued learning when the learner has moved into the new professional role. The mediation provided by leaders of the learning when a task is set<sup>32</sup> represents the start of a recursive and reciprocal cycle as opposed to the learner working on the task alone. The learner constructs a schema that is used to work on a task for the first time. Then the learner receives planned feedback at a given point. When the learner returns to refine their performance, using the external planned feedback, several things have changed. The learner is altered in three ways; they have increased knowledge, and capacity to increase that knowledge exponentially, and they have increased their systems of self-feedback. Adding to this point, the task has also increased in its complexity. At the next point of planned feedback, the learner's performance is used as a referent to adjust the feedback given, both for content and the combination of strategies that are used to make the feedback message accessible. The cycle is repeated many times, as activity is either returned for further formative assessment or used for critically reflective dialogue shared with an 'expert partner'. This model of

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<sup>32</sup> This mediation refers to seminars to orient the learner to a learning task and its goals.

feedback also implies that a seminal aspect of learning through feedback spirals is the role of internal paths of feedback (Costa & Kallick, 1995).

### *Summary*

The move from simple to more complex tools in written and oral feedback supports the interpretation that the TLs, both in training and experienced, are appropriating a new personal schema of feedback informed by their experiences. They refer to their awareness that feedback was powerful for their own learning and they could personalise aspects to move from external paths of feedback within the course context, to ‘internal paths’ incorporated into everyday professional practice.

Newman et al. (1989) observe that tools, which are culturally bound have a social history or meaning, which cannot be discovered through independent learning alone. An often-used example talks through how the usual function of a hammer is not understood by exploring the hammer itself. The learner needs to appropriate both, the hammer and its uses and effects. The main thrust of this idea lies in appropriation being seen as a two-way process. The potential of the hammer may be transformed as a new member of the culture uses it in a novel or previously unthought of way. This has relevance to the idea of feedback processes being made up of strategies that respond to the individual learner. Through this responsive process, the learner learns about the culture of feedback itself as well as about the teaching devices. This is useful to understand the importance of the idea that TLs appropriate the feedback process and how newcomers appropriate such cultural processes. Feedback provides ‘*interpretive support for making sense of*

... *heritage*' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.98). Feedback's socially constructive functions give real life meaning to practices and rationales and are one of the ways that learners make sense of a heritage.

Assessment practices are central to student experiences (Brown & Knight, 1994). This chapter has presented feedback as a complex process, employing tools, or strategies in responsive combination in order to make the feedback information as accessible as possible. These strategies increase in complexity in order to model a feedback process, which may be used inter-psychologically for 'self-feedback'. Therefore, this internalisation process begins on a social plane and moves to an inner plane where information becomes part of each individual's evolving knowledge base. Feedback that has capacity for bi-directional movement of information may be a vehicle to provide the greatest opportunity for learners to actively engage with feedback. Feedback is a dialogic process, engaging, building motivation and contributing to individuals' feelings of self worth. The next chapter takes that idea of feedback as engaging and impacting on the learner and looks at the role of feedback from the perspective of the learners.

## **Chapter Six: Receiving and using Feedback**

### **— the learner's perspective**

### *Introduction*

Students and university teachers might not share opinions about what makes feedback a helpful learning experience (MacLellen, 2001). However, there is a correlation between achievement and students who consider that they get effective feedback (Ramsden, 1991). This might suggest that some features of a feedback process enable some learners to make feedback work more powerfully for them and hence effective at stimulating improvement in learning. This raises the question of the factors interacting on feedback and its capacity to be effective. This chapter describes the meaning making around receiving feedback from the perspective of the learner.

To begin the chapter, I consider how the data informs the concept of feedback as a useable resource for learning. I present the analysis relating to this lived experience from the perspective of the participants and explore how factors impinge on using feedback for learning. Reference to the existing literature in Chapter Two, and the emerging theories of feedback as motivator, system of information exchange and accelerator in Chapter Five, are interwoven through the presentation of analysis and interpretation. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

### *Feedback collides with the learner*

Availability of feedback occurs frequently in many learning environments. However, taking feedback ‘on board’, and benefiting from the process, to not only learn more about a specific task, but to improve the potential of internal paths of feedback may not occur as a matter of course. Initially, any feedback may be perceived as a source of threat and discomfort. TL trainees talked of how

early in the course, they experienced an initial reaction at the point of feedback, which was so powerful that it had the potential to prevent engagement with any of the intent of feedback. A concept of '*Collision*' on the learning emerged as a strong explanatory idea supported by multiple instances of the respondents' references to a negative anticipation of feedback during the professional preparation for RR TLs.

The core concept of '*Collision*' is defined as the experiences around the initial experience of receiving a piece of feedback, in this case the product of formative assessment to either written or practical activity. This feedback may be written or oral, planned or incidental, from a colleague or a Trainer acting as the leader of the learning. The concept of '*Collision*' in this study has implications of passivity on the part of the learner, at the point that the Trainer gives feedback (planned or incidental, oral or written). The power to, and responsibility for, learning still lies with the Trainer, and as such does not suggest a partnership in the learning or that the feedback itself might progress the learner along any trajectory. It merely refers to the point at which the feedback is either given to the learner, if written, or shared, if oral.

Each participant uniquely constructs an immediate and emotionally governed response. The example of '*Collision*' as a phase understood by TL trainees is one of immediate and unplanned reaction, rather than a considered response to the feedback content. Charlie talks about how different authorship affects her reaction to feedback. She even goes as far as to say that '*Collision*' can be so strong that she is aware that she is not prepared to use this information in the same way as other feedback opportunities, since she "*thinks about feedback differently depending on*

*who wrote it ...and that affects how I feel about it...I have a different emotional response to it"*

(Charlie/TLT3/Int.).

Unplanned (incidental) feedback from peers potentially has the same effect. Jo

talks about how *"this can be difficult depending on how others give feedback during sessions"*

(Jo/TLT/Int). She is worried about 'colliding' with someone else's evaluation of

her learning and *"sometimes I feel as if I have nowhere to hide ..it can be upsetting (a long*

*pause).....even as far as thinking, I mustn't make eye contact, this is going to be tricky....*

*(laughs)I guess this shows how powerful feedback can affect you"* (Jo/TLT3 /Int). The long

pause might indicate how emotionally she still feels about the social setting for

receiving feedback. She understands that her immediate emotional reactions have

the potential to prevent her from considering the content of the feedback in

helpful ways though experiences later in the course caused her to reflect that *"My*

*assumption or presumption or whatever.....was always worse than the reality, my assumption was*

*the painful bit but it stayed with me"* (Jo/TLT4/Int).

This prior, anticipatory experience of feedback forms the basis of what happens

regarding the incorporation of feedback into learning as the interaction with

feedback continues. The meaning that the TL trainees attribute to each instance of

feedback involves emotional responses not separated from the feedback itself.

The feedback recipient is changed in some way. This change may not be always

characterised as learning or positive progression, but it does represent change of

some kind in the learner. Therefore, 'colliding' does not imply that some action

is taken, merely that some reaction or response system is created that affects

further development of use of the feedback by the recipient. Charlie talks about

how she is changed before she has read the feedback, *"and not always for the*

*good.....I often have a huge emotional attachment...I make a huge investment"*



(Charlie/TL4/Int). At this stage she can choose to reject it or block its potential, dependent on how it sits with existing emotions surrounding learning and the learning environment. She *"focuses on the worst bits, my reactions are strong and between receiving it and being able to use it I have to become detached from it"*(Charlie/TL4/Int). The learner is at risk of remaining at this stage of 'Collision' if the reactions are too strong to use the feedback messages to return to reflect on performance. Charlie talks about how she couldn't build on her first attempt as *"in that instance my confidence dropped, I just had to do it all again"* (Charlie/TL4/Int). So great was the impact of 'Collision', she chose to begin the task again.

Feedback for all participants produced an immediate, sometimes knee-jerk and emotional reaction. However, the strength, nature and duration of this reaction differed amongst the participants. Harri was aware she needed to move away from a 'Collision' in order to use the potential of feedback for learning. She thought that other people would *"say amongst yourselves, 'Oh god love her, she hasn't a hope, god bless her poor little head', so you see I had to get out of that first of all and when you're in that mode it takes someone else to help you get out of it"* (Harri/TLT4/Int), emphasising the feelings of passivity mentioned above.

I go on to discuss interacting dimensions seeming to influence the strength, or impact of 'Collision'.

### ***Intensity of Impact***

Emotional response, a within-learner factor, can be so great that the learner dismisses the feedback or blocks it out. At the beginning of the TL course, some emotions referred to and described by the TL trainees were instancing feelings towards the blocking of feedback. For example, the emotional response for

Charlie was so extreme she felt it affected her response/reaction to all other feedback. Her emotional reaction to feedback early in the course to one particular activity about which she felt unsure, leaving her *“very shaken, I felt myself completely disabled ... there were a lot of things that I thought I could do, a lot of things that I thought were completely stable in my life that became completely unstuck ... I felt angry”* (Charlie/CE Spring/Obs). The ensuing lack of confidence left her unable to use the feedback constructively in reference to the task. She abandoned that learning product and set off again.

One's previous experiences of feedback are also perceived by the TL trainees as colliding with how they react when you get a new piece of feedback. The impact following 'Collision' is informed by a continuum of prior experiences, moving from constructive or destructive. Harri talks about how a key incident made her feel very distrustful of feedback. She thought the role of feedback was to indicate the aspects of her work that were not up to scratch when a teacher *“gave (me) feedback that was demeaning in front of the whole class ... he shared my short comings”* (Harri/TLT1/Int). The resulting influence on the impact of 'Collision' was deconstructive as it *“made me not trust feedback and seeing it as suspicious and only going to point out to me all the things I can't do”* (Harri/TLT1/Int). She goes on to refer to blocking out the feedback potential as she *“never bothered to listen to him again..... but maybe I should have”* (Harri/TLT1/Int).

As experiences with feedback become perceived as more constructive, so the impact of 'Collision' on the response becomes less intense and therefore the learner is more likely to use the feedback for learning. Kym reflects on how she noticed a change in how she reacted when receiving feedback: *“I wanted to be right, to be perfect all the time and I would engage in blaming other people where as now I think my*

*attitude is much more healthy in that I can look at my work and take on developing it and thinking about what I can change to make it better, I would see feedback itself as crucial in developing this change of attitude"* (Kym/TLT4/Int). She sees herself as having learned a different response system through feedback experience itself.

The environment in which feedback is received also relates to the intensity of 'Collision'. The learning environment contains the people and the artefacts within which the learning is located, creating expectations. Feedback is received in this context personally, impersonally and socially in a group setting. At the start of the course, the more public the evaluation is the more 'Collision' seems to be felt. But as the TL trainees become used to using each other's feedback for their own learning, this (or so they perceive) weighs less on 'Collision'.

However, the data suggests that their own estimation of how well they have done has an additional impact, as Charlie suspected *"that I would have a lot of difficulty in this research side of the course ..I felt that I was going to have trouble and so I reacted very negatively to feedback in the group"* (Charlie/TLT4/Int). This relates to a self-judgement on expertise in the area of knowledge being fed back on, which can add to feelings of 'Collision'.

Perceived goal sharing has an impact on degree of 'Collision'. Harri *"didn't trust the person who gave the feedback unless I felt that they were trying to help me improve"* (Harri/TLT1/Int). This may indicate that it is hard to trust judgements about performance level when you have no prior experiences in that context upon which to base that trust. There are initially no experiences on which to base trust for the leaders of the learning, knowing they weren't trying to *"make me feel small, on a bit of a power trip, you know the big I am"* (Harri/TLT1/Int). There are limited experiences on which to base a judgement that learner and leader of the learning share goals

and will be individually supportive in the meeting of those goals. As the participants become used to working alongside Trainers, they begin to view them as partners in the learning, with shared goals and responsibility based on experiences that demonstrate trust: *I'm more aware now and I think I trust....it's always been done in a very supportive way*" (Kym/TLT3/Int).

The force, or degree, of 'Collision' would seem to be determined by where each individual places themselves along three response-continua of Rejection versus Recognition, Distrust versus Trust and Passive versus Active.

### 1. Rejection versus Recognition

Here I use the word 'recognition' to mean acknowledge the personal value of feedback, as opposed to rejecting or blocking its message. This 'Rejection versus Recognition' continuum refers to the degree to which the individual learner is blocking feedback or acknowledging it as having something useful to contribute to learning. The data would suggest that this could be a conscious act used to prevent having to deal with the feedback contents as change is too threatening at this stage (see examples above). However, it would seem likely that this can also be an unconscious act, the learner being unaware they are not recognising the potential value of feedback. In order for the learner to move away from the immediate and emotional knee jerk reaction, they may need to be nearer to recognising than rejecting. In order to recognise the potential value, the learner may need to have experienced the benefits of feedback.

### 2. Distrust versus Trust

Initially, when entering a new or unfamiliar learning setting, the learner may not trust the motives or the ability of the leader of the learning (and the environment) to feed back useful and encouraging information. The point at which the learner

is on the continuum between distrust and trust influences the degree of '*Collision*' on the learner. The TL trainees moved towards being more trustful of the feedback and its effects on both their learning and their levels of confidence. The learner is enculturated into a feedback environment in order to increase levels of trust in shared goals. This may be another effect of having frequent feedback in many settings.

### 3.Passive versus Active

This continuum relates to the learner's concept of their own role in the learning and in the feedback cycle, and therefore the sort of anticipation that is brought to bear on the receiving of feedback. The more passively the learner behaves, the less control they can exert when reviewing the feedback, therefore the greater the degree of '*Collision*' since the learner considers it is something 'done' to them, rather than a product of a learning partnership in which there is two-way influence, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Whilst the perceptions of the TL trainees would lead to the conclusion that they understood '*Collision*' to depend on these three separate aspects, they cannot be unrelated and unaffected by one another. For example, if one begins to appreciate that the feedback was useful in some way, then it would lead to some increase in trust. This realignment along the continua to less impact could be stimulated by movement along any of the three continua mentioned and go on to produce change in the other two. Presumably positive movement has to happen to some degree along all three continua, since, for example, to be trustful and accept the feedback message requires some degree of active response before the feedback can be used for learning. TL trainees' responses suggest that they were propelled



DIAGRAM REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



*Figure 9: A model of supplantive learning. Atherton, 1999*

Initial ‘destabilisation’ and ‘disorientation’ are suggested in the model (see Figure 9 above) and would add to the interpretation of why ‘Collision’ seems at its greatest in the early months of the course, as old learning is being destabilised. This involves not only cognitive change but also affective change. Previous ways of thinking are being disrupted and the learners are at their most vulnerable, unsure of to what the feedback will refer and what change will be called for. Ideas of learning as loss support my interpretation that the learner might initially have feelings of worry and concern about feedback even though they are committed to the change process involved in professional learning.

Also of relevance here are the theories of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). The findings of Festinger's (1957) study suggest that people of a more inflexible disposition find it more difficult to change and are therefore likely to be challenged more by '*supplative*' learning. Frustration at this loss of competence can compel the learner to reject new learning, perhaps most likely to be related to more rigid personal perceptions of the interplay of prior and present experiences and professional self-concepts (Atherton, 1999) and to situations that require the appropriation of new ways of thinking and behaving. This would support the conclusion that the degree of '*Collision*' is uniquely constructed and dependent on how far along the continua of Passivity, Trust and Recognition each learner self-locates (see Figure 8). Initial position of the continua is informed and influenced by emotions, feeling, perceptions, expectations and prior experiences. As 'already-expert' professional learners, the TL trainees will have had many prior experiences with feedback, with a variety of purposes. Some of the experiences may have been negatively perceived and a reaction as '*Collision*' may be an early attempt to avoid the feelings of instability or inadequacy that may result from receiving feedback.

### *Making meaning of feedback*

Definitions and therefore personal interpretations of the concept of feedback will also vary considerably from learner to learner and this will inform the level of intensity of feedback. If it is understood as information that will allow the learner to bridge the gap between actual level of attainment and reference level of attainment (Ramaprasad, 1983, p.4), the learner may expect to be provided with some idea of the referent level the teacher is working to in order to provide



feedback (Sadler, 1989, cited in Clarke, 2000a, p.3). Feedback should also provide information about how the judgment was made (Gipps, McCallum & Hargreaves, 2000, p.91). If this meaning is closer to the learner's concept of feedback, they might expect to be shown how to make their work attain a referent level and therefore might anticipate personal evaluation, or "*authoritative information ... that will reinforce or modify responses to instruction and guide them more efficiently in attaining the goals of the course*" (Carlson, 1979, cited in Ovando, 1992, p.4). This view of feedback could all too easily create expectations within the learner (Clarke, 2000b), of waiting for the external judgment from the leader of the learning. This simple concept of feedback with a lack of focus on the learner's participation in the feedback process is perhaps one that is commonly held by learners undertaking higher professional learning for the first time. The impact of '*Collision*' has to be redirected to levels that allow the learner to make use of feedback information, and suggests a more constructive and active concept of feedback. The next section goes on to look at how the TL trainees participants made meaning of this redirection process.

### ***Catalysing Learning***

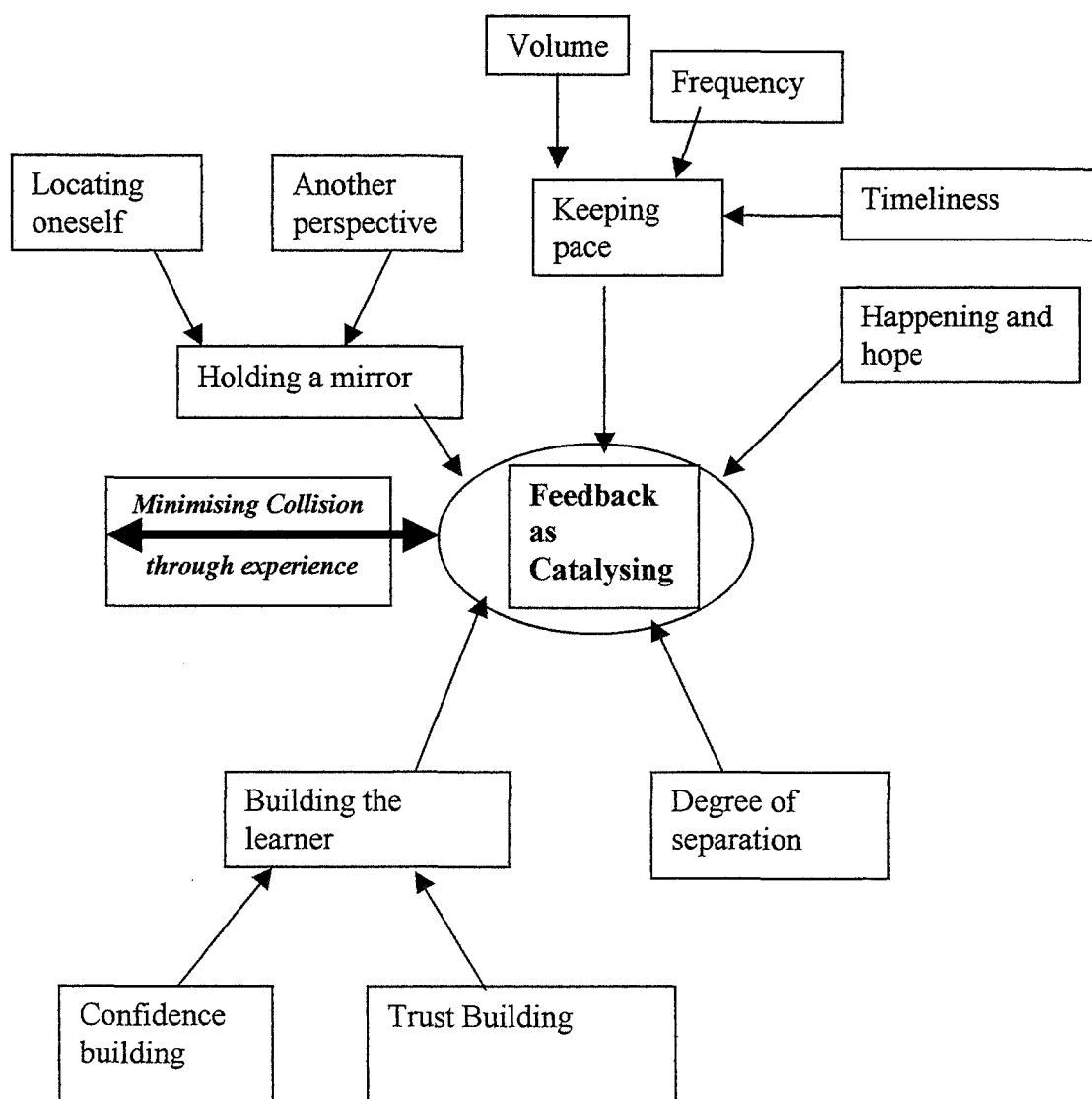
For feedback to '*Catalyse*', the learner has to take responsibility for accepting some aspect of the feedback itself rather than blocking, or rejecting, the potential of feedback. Feedback information is given with the intention that it be used to effect change in some way. The concept of '*Catalysing*' refers to feedback's capacity to stimulate action and reflection.

For Harri, "*at some point the penny dropped that I wasn't getting half the message and I could trust you to give me the full story and it was your role to give me the full story and so I stopped*

*worrying about it and that was liberating*” (Harri/TLT4/Int). One of the intentions of feedback is that the learner acts in the immediate service of working up the work for a subsequent formative assessment (practice-based or written) point. This might mean re-drafting or including some aspect of activity that the learner had neglected to include in the initial attempt, but it *“it takes on a different function after I know what it says”* (Jo/TLT3/Int).

Then, she begins to take responsibility for her own learning and uses the feedback to modify action in some way, as *“it feeds forward to something you’ve got to do.....it feeds back to tell you how you’ve done against what you were supposed to do”* (Jo/TLT3/Int). The learning she is referring to seems to be immediate and related to the activity which was fed back on rather than resulting in some change generalised to another activity - lasting and permanent change. Harri also talks about moving towards a phase when she can use the feedback information and says *“I am happy to get back in there, I can achieve that, I can fix this thing”* (Harri/TLT4/Int). The use of the word ‘thing’ suggests that change here can be seen as context and content specific rather than generative. TL trainees describe how they respond to evaluations of their work rather than transforming their understanding of the activity or their role within the activity.

The figure below draws together the five aspects of *Separating, Keeping pace, Building, Happening and Hope* and *Holding a mirror*. The TL trainees described these aspects as influential on usefulness as they moved to being able to use feedback as a catalyst for action.



*Figure10: Model of influences on feedback as Catalytic*

The TL trainees described the usability, or catalytic potential of feedback as fluid and influenced by interacting features between learner and feedback. I next describe how TL trainees conceptualised features influencing catalytic potential for feedback.

### *Degrees of Separation*

The learner needs to be able to step back from the emotions of learning sufficiently for the practical action associated with the feedback to be attempted. A great deal

of effort has gone into many of the tasks evaluated and reflected upon. To continue to see the piece of work and ensuing feedback as somehow connected to worth or value as a human being, is not perceived as helpful. For feedback to become something that is useable for learning, both performance (activity or a piece of work) and feedback have to be seen as individual, personal yet separated from personal worth for it to be helpful and useable. Kym sees that feedback *“isn’t a personal thing because it isn’t about me but I can look at it as a general learning opportunity, it is personal because it’s me its my work but I’m not taking it personally if you see what I mean, I think there is a difference”* (Kym/TLT4/Int). The degree to which the learner can view the feedback as not part of personal judgement but of the feedback process, influences the feedback potential to become ‘Catalytic’.

Perceptions of the importance of degree of separation seem to be related to potential problem of the risks involved in responding (Black & Wiliam, 1998), where multiple feedback opportunities are understood to reduce potential risks of responding to feedback and of taking risks surrounding new ways of working. Formative feedback in this context is not graded. This is of importance here. An early focus on grades may give the learner the idea that ability and therefore performance is fixed and therefore unchangeable no matter what the effort expended (Dweck, 2000). One can separate oneself as a person more easily than if one’s ego and self-esteem are not damaged by direct and overt comparisons with other group members (Craven et al., 1991). Not providing grades at this point may help engender the idea of learning in this context as personalised and therefore investment in the risks of involving oneself in learning is worth doing.

### *Keeping pace*

A long lag between action and feedback on that action was not perceived as furthering the learning or supporting the learner at the point it was needed. If feedback comes too late for a set of related ideas in the learning programme, it may not serve to move the learning on, or “*keep you looking in ways that match what we are doing in sessions*”, either for that specific task or in a more generative way (Harri/TLT2/Int). This insight refers to how the feedback incidents are timed and how that fits with current learning goals and the scheduled session content.

Timing mattered also in relation to how soon after submitting a piece of work the feedback was available to them. Researcher data of course evaluations showed that TL trainees considered it helpful to have prompt feedback to written activity, within a week or two, whilst the sequence and issues of the teaching were still uppermost in the mind, rather than waiting for a formal report at a later date (CE Spring/Obs.). Reference was made to the ways in which instantaneous feedback to teaching and tutoring activity supported learning in some ways due to its immediacy.

Also encompassed in the concept of ‘*Keeping pace*’ is the issue of frequency of feedback. Whilst the TL trainees grew to appreciate that feedback enabled them to achieve their learning goals and the goals of the course quicker than they would have without the scaffolding of feedback, “*it’s still just more work*” (Harri/TLT4/Int). On a practical and emotional level, fast rounds of feedback and a lot of feedback in one instance make it less useable, “*especially over the last few months when things have been coming in and coming back quite frequently and there have been times when a short, snappy question, or comment about what it is you’re doing or little helpful hints where a long drawn out written piece of feedback is just another part of your essay that you can’t figure out what it means*”

(Harri/TLT4/Int). Volume and frequency are inferred here. At points where there were rounds of feedback in a short space of time, the possibility of further ‘Collision’ seems to mitigate against using feedback for future learning and reflection as “*I just want to get everything in and out of the way*” (Harri/TLT4/Int).

Charlie talks about how her feelings about feedback opportunities fluctuate and continue to be influenced by timing and amount of feedback: “*I thought of it as not evaluative but supportive but now I think it is evaluative*” (Charlie/TLT4/Int). This comment was made during the final interview, at a point where rounds of feedback to several draft assignments took place in the space of a week and a half. Charlie’s comments reflect how at this point the amount of feedback she was receiving and the short space of time in which it was being received made it less ‘Catalytic’ to moving on and returned her to the feeling that the feedback evaluated her and her work rather than supported development.

Feedback information needs to be turned into action almost immediately or it is a missed opportunity for both learner and leader of the learning (Boud, 2000).

However, ‘*Keeping Pace*’ is much more than a simple problem of timeliness (Costa & Kallick, 1995). Feedback spirals help us think about the idea of different things occurring simultaneously. Some feedback spirals are completed immediately; some have a far longer time frame. For example, the case study context offers immediate short-term practical goals with short distance between feedback opportunities, and more long-term goals of writing critically and reflectively about the file-resource, therefore spirals leading to both present and future activity. This suggests a far more complex picture of interaction than is currently suggested by the literature and may indicate the importance of specific

course demands and how they are timed when considering how best to plan for effective feedback opportunities.

The TL trainees felt that too much feedback becomes over whelming (see also Chapter Five, Exp TL/Helen). This viewpoint was also discussed by Lunsford (1997) but the view of how much feedback is too much, needs to take account of the learner's changing needs in a given feedback environment. It may well be that early in the course, a few comments are effective in working to reduce the effects of '*Collision*' but that the volume required is changing, '*Keeping pace*' and responding to the changing needs of the learner.

### *"Building"*

Use of this metaphor of building learners has come from the data. Feedback, as perceived by the respondents can build learner attributes and it can build learning. Both of these aspects are very important to the relative usefulness of the feedback. During the final interview with Jo she talked about feedback's capacity to be *"up-building to the learner, you know, it's also taking what you've done seriously, yes seriously, as an adult learner, it's never overlooked and there's also something in there about all of that for me in my experiences on the course that have helped me grow"* (Jo/TLT4/Int). This example implies that the entity of learner is added to in some way. The learner can be 'built' in one of two ways; in levels of confidence as one becomes *"less fearful of having feedback on that work as you have had it before and been able to use it"* (Harri/TLT2/Int), and the expansion of trust for the judgement and motives of the leaders of the learning as it *"it helps build trust over time"* (Harri/TLT2/Int). The participants described how building confidence helps feedback become '*Catalytic*', often at the initial read-through act of reviewing the feedback. This develops a feeling that they can then

address the practical or reflective action necessary and “*makes it easier to tackle something unfamiliar next time .. I suppose it’s motivation as well you know someone is interested in your ideas and how you’ve tackled it so it’s worth spending time on*” (Jo/TLT2/Int) and is an initial and important step to engagement. This boost in confidence is not wholly due to receiving praise, as Kym describes. “*It allowed me to build my confidence, pointed out what I was doing well, so appreciated the effort [...] I had invested but it did help me see what I was missing*” (Kym/TLT4/Int). Confidence seems to have been built on a balanced view of what was going well and what might be beneficial to consider next.

Whilst growing learner confidence is implied in much of the literature about motivation, trust is somewhat neglected as a fluid and interacting factor of feedback efficiency. Trust was important to these participants and perhaps is a somewhat unique feature of professional learning that is involving an identity shift. This may differ for a learner following a differently designed professional learning route. It may be that a course that does not include the interweaving of theory, practical and professional activity linked to learning in a culture or organisation, may not need to develop trust to such an extent. I would suggest that learning involving a personal or professional identity shift creates a somewhat unique need for feedback to build trust in order to be powerful for learning. This will not be achieved exclusively through feedback but opportunity for increasing trust (including shared goals) is something that the leaders of professional learning environments need to consider.

### *“Hope and Happening”*

This idea refers to the importance of clarity of feedback information that shows the learner how to get from current understandings and performance to a more



sophisticated level. TL trainees look for very specific links with what they have done and what they need to do next. Without specificity they perceive that feedback would be less capable of being ‘Catalytic’ to their activity. Kym identifies *“points to move on are so specific and clear, for example we had feedback on the case study, it was very clear on parts where we had to move on”* (Kym/CE spring/Obs) as helping to ‘close the gap’ between where she is now (as represented in the activity) and where she needs to be. The TL trainees often characterise this clarity as ‘specificity’. It is this feedback quality that they articulate as being particularly helpful in feedback experiences that they are able to act on. This would seem to link to the idea of learners working within their ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1978) as it *“tells you what to improve and what to do...what to carry on with, what to develop...new ways of thinking about it”* (Kym/TLT3/Int).

Specificity is needed to help the learner ‘fill the gaps’ between the current activity and what needs to happen next.

The function of filling the gap is the feedback effect rather than the informational content (Sadler, 1989). This affirms the important feedback feature of identifying a clear route between hope and happening (Black & Wiliam, 2003), including *“beliefs about the goals of learning, about one’s capacity to respond, about the risks involved in responding in different ways and about what learning should be like”* (Black & Wiliam, 1998 p.21).

### *“Holding a mirror ”*

This metaphor coming from the data refers to the extent to which feedback informs another perspective on either their work or their actions. It provides *“a different perspective, an angle to look at, because if you are doing something that is your own*

*thoughts, your own ideas, and put points down you may not see it in another way, you can add things and suggest things that help rethinking,”* (Kym/TLT4/Int).

This opportunity to “*see what you’ve done through another’s eyes*” (Jo/TLT3/Int) represents not only another perspective, but implies that it results in thinking about the piece of work or practical activity differently, beginning to see how it does or does not fulfil the expected outcome at that point in the learning (Jo/TLT4/Int). Therefore, the TL trainees consider it very important in the process of adding to their existing level of learning, getting “*a clearer picture of what is really going on you often don’t know yourself*” (Jo/TLT4/Int). This not only helps the learning itself, but seems to underline the feelings of self-worth and importance to the global enterprise, as “*I’m in there somewhere. The feedback is me, it reflects me personally*” (Jo/TLT2/Int).

The concept of feedback reflecting back to the learner remained significant to previously trained TLs. Feedback “*gave me a kind of 360 degree appraisal*” (Frances/ExpTL/Int), that could be used to monitor many aspects of the work simultaneously.

### **Summary**

Feedback as a process as understood and perceived by TL trainees begins before any planned information is received. It begins at the point that the context for receiving feedback is created. Feelings of ‘*Collision*’ as resistance or disturbance were described as relating most frequently to lived experience early in the course. After several opportunities to build trust around feedback, the feelings of ‘*Collision*’ tend to begin to diminish. This diminution of emotional impact might therefore be considered as one of the roles of feedback in professional learning

i.e. reducing the intensity of reaction towards constructive discussion of written and practical activity as indicators of performance and understanding. The goal of this diminution is for learners to view constructive criticism more proactively and not limit opportunity for obtaining resources for internal paths of feedback by reacting in ways that prevent engagement with the points for learning and development. Emotional reactions change in amplitude and strength as the learner usefully begins to consider how feedback can assist learning. TL participants perceived that reactions to feedback diminished, understanding that they had learned to react differently, or redirect emotions in order to ‘hear’ the feedback information. When seeking to effect change through feedback, both personal and organisational, it is an appeal to the learner's largely emotional perception of the vision they share with the organisation or culture. Triple loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978) seems close to the idea of feedback as ‘catalytic’ on the learner. There has been a change in the TL trainees’ view of themselves as learners and in the level of cognition. This can be considered transformational learning. Feedback as a series of planned events has achieved that change and communicated the worth of change. This seems to infer a bigger role for feedback than process alone.

Combining conclusions of Chapters Five and Six, the role of feedback is one of providing a means of combining action and reflection in the form of praxis (Freire, 1972). Feedback experiences give the learners the opportunity to engage in understanding, agreeing to or forming vision of the potential of feedback as a learning process in the learning environments that they themselves will create. I return to this more complex view of feedback in Chapter Eight, as I conclude the study.

The TL trainees constructed schema around their lived experiences of feedback that informed their perspective on what factors influenced how useful, or ‘*catalytic*’ feedback was to their development, both personal and cognitive. They considered that factors of *Separating, Keeping pace, Building, Happening and Hope* and *Holding a mirror* were influential on the perceived usability of the feedback information.

A sense of one’s own work is important but feedback directed to implied fixed state learner qualities and capacity is not representative of the role of feedback in professional learning. The next chapter goes on to describe feedback as a process stimulating transformational change.

## **Chapter Seven : A Process for Transformative Change**

### *Introduction*

Feedback can be of immediate short-term utility to learning. It can be used to catalyse learning action towards improving performance on a specific learning task. Feedback can also inspire lasting change of concepts of learning with feedback therefore having a longer-term goal. The theoretical description of a feedback process achieving transformative change emerged from the data. In addition to this, the TL trainees began to seek opportunities for feedback, seeing feedback as integral to reflection on their own learning and continued development in their professional role. This perceived need for feedback inspires the learner to look for resources for internal feedback when external feedback is not available and indicates a new understanding of feedback's potential.

This chapter describes how TL trainees made meaning of feedback as transforming both cognition and emotion. In the first section I consider how the concept of transformative learning might further understanding of the role of feedback, describing how feedback experiences have the potential to power learning. Perspective transformation is the Trainer's goal. Subsequently I consider why perspective transformation might be a valuable outcome for complex professional learning and the conditions for achieving such an outcome. I conclude with a summary to the chapter.

### *What is transformative learning?*

Transformative learning involves becoming more reflective and critical, being more open to the perspectives of others and being less defensive and more accepting of new ideas. The idea suggests that individuals can be 'transformed'

through a process of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1997). It also describes a process of conscientization, or autonomous thinking by which adults "*achieve a deepening awareness of both the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and [...] their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it*" (Freire cited in Schubeck, 1993, p. 46). This suggests that it is the process by which learners make sense of their own experiences and use those experiences as a way to understand and reflect on "*how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings*" (Mezirow 1991, p. 167). This would seem to make transformative learning a useful way to begin to understand the meaning that TL trainees make of their experiences of feedback. Meaning schemas that make up understanding may change and develop as an individual adds to or integrates understandings. This occurs routinely through learning (Mezirow, 1995). I see this as related to the idea of triple loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978) as presented in Chapter Two. However, the sorts of transformation through feedback occurring for the TL trainees would seem to be more complex than that suggested by the model of triple loop learning. Whilst the model is recursive and has scope for reciprocal information between learner and teacher, it does not have scope for aspects of the same task being of differing complexity, i.e. functioning partly at double and partly as triple loop level. It also doesn't feature the role of emotions on any learning instance. The process of learning through feedback has parallels with descriptions of perspective transformation leading to transformative learning. This would seem to occur

much less frequently and may result from a "disorienting dilemma"(Mezirow, 1995). There may be more than one way to trigger this dilemma. It may involve naturally occurring transition processes or personal crisis. It may also result from an accumulation of learning transformations over a period of time (Mezirow 1995, p. 50). These dilemmas prompt critical reflection and the development of new ways of interpreting experiences. This description of perspective transformation corresponds with how the TL trainees reflect on feedback experiences. As the TL trainees talk about how they use feedback, they are relating, consciously or not, to how it was used to 'transform' them. Perspective transformative learning involves permanent and lasting change of beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our perceptions and understandings (Mezirow, 1997). This theory has pertinence here as it also focuses on the central importance of the learner (Taylor, 1998). Although the teacher has a part to play in how a learner uses experience to transform perspectives, learners have principal responsibility for the somewhat unique ways in which learning environments impact on them. The theory also has scope for considering how the social environment could influence or enhance the learning process.

Transformative learning theory also suggests that cognitive and affective layers are interactive, both playing a role in transformative learning (Grabov, 1997).

There are suggestions that these two dimensions might be in conflict. This would also add to the idea that experienced professionals engage in learning knowing, with their rational and objective mind, that some change will occur. However, the risks of learning can come as a shock, and result in reactions far less rational, thus stalling the learning.



### *Lasting Change*

The TL trainees perceived feedback experiences to have changed the ways in which they approached both assessed tasks and feedback opportunities. They interpreted their own use of feedback as having two kinds of goals. Jo talks about how she can see there is a short term, immediate and content specific way in which feedback works, *“feeding forward, yes very much feeding forward to the immediate but also to the long term seeing things that you do know but also what you will have to do, like seeing the modelling of feedback itself - something that is meant to inspire me to do it similarly”*

(Jo/TLT4/Int). In this example, she is talking about appropriating the feedback processes. However, she also seems to talk about a more generative change; one which has changed the quality of her learning and her concept of learning itself. Rather than seeing the role of feedback as linking it to one particular learning task, it is additionally perceived as *“crucial in developing this change of attitude about how you can use feedback”* (Kym/TLT4/Int). Feedback processes have additionally re-shaped understanding of feedback itself, to see it in a new way – *“not a criticism, (it is) a vehicle for moving forward”* (Kym/TLT4/Int). Here, Kym talks about how her experiences have changed aspects of and approaches to the way she thinks about feedback and its uses. This represents a transformation of her experiences rather than an immediate and planned outcome of a single piece of feedback. She is aware of a new state of understanding and articulates her meaning schema as being able to rearrange previous understandings with some higher-level insights about the task, or their role, or ways of thinking or doing. Therefore, feedback assists the learner by exposition of new ideas, evaluating them and linking them, serving to realign previous understandings alongside new insight. The new learning does not erase previous knowledge but reconstructs it, adding new

dimensions and new relationships. The learner has the potential to be changed, or transformed through the cognitive opportunities offered by the feedback.

Information for learning has gone beyond the specific to the generative and “*it helps when you are trying to do something outside your previous experience.. it was okay before so you can do it again*” (Kym/TLT4/Int).

Feedback has the stated aim of improving learning and we might judge efficacy or power of feedback on improved outcomes. However, in a single feedback episode, applied to just one learning instance, transformative change is not implied. Some learning might be applicable to further pieces of work that have generic possibilities. For example, if feedback focuses on presenting an argument, it is possible that the learning may be carried forward to other instances where the learner will be evaluated on their ability to construct an argument. This learning effect on a single concept is not transformative however (Mezirow, 1996). The data demonstrates that with cumulative and repeated instances of effective feedback, an altogether more long-lasting change begins to take place.

The TL trainees perceived the feedback they had received to have also influenced learning on a deeper more conceptual level, which involved awareness of how they learned and what sort of feedback was useful to them and when. They were able to extrapolate some ‘rules of thumb’ which would enable them to construct effective feed back opportunities for the teachers they will go on to train in Reading Recovery. This seems more complex than learning which is performance directed. The feedback which enabled this transforming of prior knowledge and experience seems to refer to generative learning points in addition to more task-specific feedback information, the interaction of the two having the potential to create transformative learning opportunities. What might have to

occur to make a piece of feedback propel learning further and deeper than learning related to only that instance? I go on to discuss this point.

### *Generative Information*

The TL trainees described contexts where feedback that was instrumental in producing transformed concepts had aimed to change ways of thinking about theory or practice, rather than just aim to ‘fix up’ that particular piece of work (or child, or session, instance of learning). This would seem to imply that it was a goal of the leader of the learning in that setting to trigger transformative change experiences, though this may have not been a conscious act. Repeated powerful feedback experiences, when generative in nature, have promoted the concept of feedback to one of conscious social practice with a vital role in learning. These experiences are perceived to have changed the nature of social interaction, even when not in an evaluated context since *“we constantly feed back to each other though, away from the sessions, eating a meal and this is good practice at questioning your own ideas”*(Harri/TLT2/Int). Feedback becomes understood as a planned and considered way that learning is moved from the specific to the general and generative as *“you can use the comments to think about other things sometimes”*(Kym/TLT3/Int).

The concept of feedback as an evaluation of performance is no longer the predominant conceptualisation of feedback in this learning environment. Feedback is perceived as contributing to growth and learning in a broader way than just refining a single task. Harri talks about how the feedback had changed her understanding of the nature of the task itself. She was able to dispense with her initial low-level work *“because of the feedback we had received on the case study, it was a*

*different level. I started the OCS<sup>33</sup> on a much higher level, one which would not have been possible without the rounds of feedback” (Harri/TLT4/Int).* This suggests that they consider themselves to be transformed by their feedback experiences, both personally and cognitively. This would seem to be a change in conceptual understanding regarding the power and potential of feedback.

### *Remodelling conceptual understanding*

The described perceptions of the TL trainees point to key elements of feedback that develop aspects of their conceptual understanding which in turn work to develop ways of learning, seeking evaluation and using feedback. Their understanding of feedback potential is itself undergoing transformation from the simple toward the sophisticated and complex. Feedback experiences are attributed with remodelling understanding of critically reflective practice. Some aspects of this change are consciously understood. Charlie reflects on how her experiences have enabled her to shed *“this fear of the feedback I had at the beginning where I kept thinking I am a complete failure I must have done it all horribly wrong (Charlie/TLT 4/Int).* This reflection on a change in attitude to the reception of feedback to one of *“a way, a process to move on”(Kym/TLT4/Int)* was common across all the TL trainees. Some further aspects of change are revealed. For example, Kym’s responses during the initial baseline interview conceptualised feedback as primarily emotional experience, where validation represented a build in confidence but responsibility remained with the teacher to identify the actions needed to improve. *“It allowed me to build my confidence, pointed out what I was doing well, so appreciated the effort I*

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<sup>33</sup> Case studies were designed around teaching experiences and reflection on the literature and experience of that teaching. Case studies were undertaken with a 6-year-old pupil in RR and an older struggling reader, aged between 9 and 11. OCS refers to the latter activity.

*had invested*” (Kym/TLT1/Int). The reliance on the leader of the learning at this stage is evident by her comment *“you do need an outside observer to clarify things for you .....that is so hard to do on your own ..it clarifies your own practice and tells you what to do next”*(Kym/TLT1/Int).

At the end of the year, Kym was reflecting on feedback as a catalyst in attitudinal change, reflecting that she *“would engage in blaming other people”*. She sees her view of learning and developing as becoming *“much more healthy in that I can look at my work and take on developing it and thinking about what I can change to make it better”*

(Kym/TLT4/Int). She also talks about needing to create her own feedback systems and how that is integral to continuing to learn in her professional environment creating internal paths of feedback where *“part of it will be my own feedback”*(Kym/TLT4/Int). She is quite clear that part of her concept of feedback is that it is crucial to learning, concluding *“I will have to give feedback to myself”*

(Kym/TLT4/Int). She sees herself as having acquired the skills necessary to continue reflection on the learning environments she creates. Her understanding of feedback as a process has changed in its application to her own learning and for creating effective learning environments for others. The next section considers whether the feedback experiences have also influenced level of participation.

### *Changing level of Participation*

The TL trainees described how they began to use feedback to self-position on a trajectory both within the micro context of the course and the macro context of adoption of goals, i.e. being a Teacher Leader. Their concept of themselves as peripheral or central to the enterprise is impacted on by feedback. They perceived

a change in personal concepts of learning and this led to change in the sorts of feedback they sought. They got a sense of their own progress through feedback and this in turn helped move their participation from peripheral towards central (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They described how feedback helped them see themselves in the new role, providing both reassurance *“that yes I am able to do this teacher leader thing, and yes it’s very daunting..., the focused feedback really reinforced that for me and was a high point of the term...I could do it after all (Harri/CE Spring/Obs).*

Feedback has been a major part of their becoming aware that level of participation impacts on learning. Harri talks about how she got a sense of how her levels of participation and the quality of that participation compared to the experienced Teacher Leaders during a residential Professional Development course. She resourced the internal feedback paths from the unplanned and implied information she got from the Trainers. This demonstrates that it was important to her to get feedback on level of participation although she knew she was not being evaluated in a planned way during this instance. It implies she is moving towards using internal paths of feedback from a variety of sources to self-monitor, in this case her levels of participation. *“We were allowed to feel new if we wanted to, no judgement by you lot<sup>34</sup>...waiting for us to be ready...and there was no reassurance, but that was reassuring (laughs) you know what I mean...you didn’t feel we needed to be separated and encouraged and reassured all the time so you thought we were ready to be part of the bigger group...so it was not needed...that was the best feedback of all” (Harri/TLT3/Int).* Knowing that level of participation was important to gaining full potential from learning experiences seems to have encouraged self-monitoring. This is related to the generative qualities of feedback. The TL trainees described how feedback

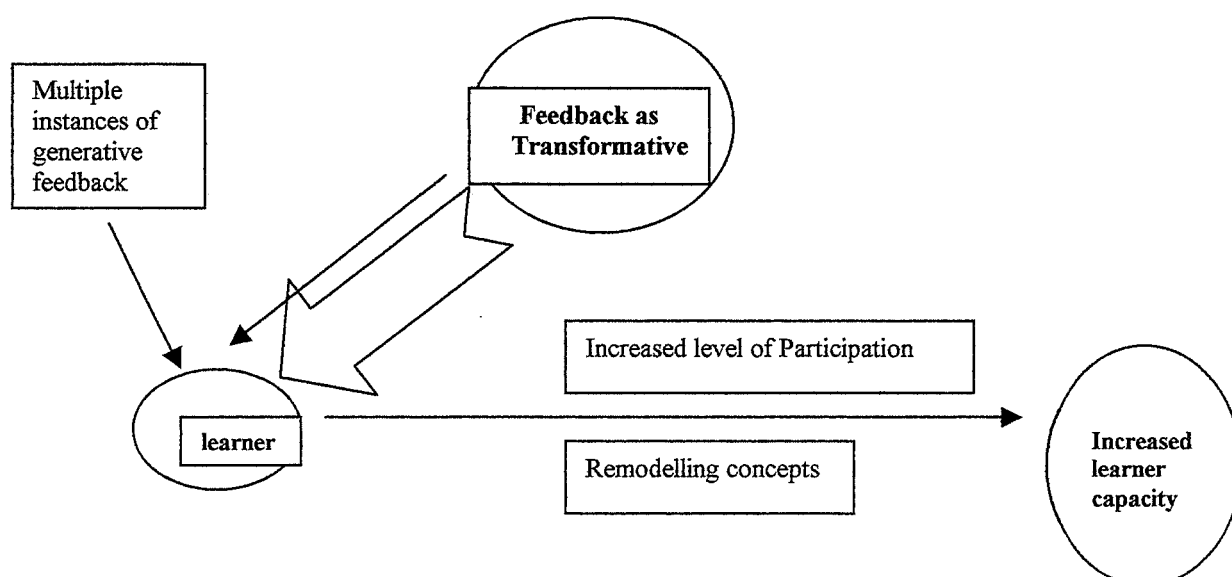
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<sup>34</sup> The leaders of the professional development in this setting – the RR Trainer team.

acknowledging that learning can be a risk, supported how comfortable they felt with taking learning risks. This type of feedback also engendered the perception that playing safe and not attempting to use your new knowledge does not facilitate development as much as taking calculated and informed learning risks. Therefore, feedback was perceived to transform the level of risk-taking from sticking with assured outcomes to attempting new endeavours, as previous experiences *“gave me the confidence to take risks in other areas”* (Jo/TLT4/Int).

TL trainees came to understand feedback as an integral part of their learning and were beginning to formulate ways they can get feedback when not part of the course learning environment. They have moved towards being self-evaluative and therefore critically reflective of their own performance *“to give feedback to myself and I think that will be quite important”* (Kym/TLT4/Int). The way of working has been transformed to actively looking for sources of feedback about their own performance in both written and practical activity, as one can *“become much less analytical if you are left to your own devices for too long and after a while you may need a bit of, well, feedback top-up”* (Kym/TLT4/Int).

The figure below illustrates how the consistent use of generative feedback may lead to feedback stimulating transformative change, therefore resulting in a lasting and permanent change in the learner, the way they learn and the concepts they use in relation to learning, particularly feedback.



*Figure 11: Model of Influences on the Transformative Potential of Feedback.*

Feedback within the course came to be understood by TL trainees as having an ultimate goal of transformative change. Feedback was used in a range of contexts not only to power learning in given task contexts, but to remodel perceptions of the nature of learning itself. Feedback processes seemed to journey towards the ultimate goal, beginning by acting first as ‘*Collision*’, then ‘*Catalyst*’ and finally as ‘*Transformation*’. The feedback documents and dialogues also developed in response to the changing learner needs as seen in Chapter Five, though the TL trainees were less unaware of this.

The ‘*Collision*’ phase is a unique and only partially visible response system that seems as if it cannot be re-written by leaders of the learning in that context; it can only be over-written by new experiences and new ways of thinking and working with feedback. There was an implicit understanding of this process of ‘*Collision*’, as they talked about needing to consider individual reactions to feedback in the language they chose for feedback information (T/FGI/May).<sup>35</sup> This ‘re-programming’ of the response system that determines ‘*Collision*’ occurs as a

<sup>35</sup> Data code – T – Trainer, FGI – Focus Group Interview.



result of the design of the learning programme for the feedback process itself.

Positive feedback experiences and relationships with feedback and the external providers of feedback serve to minimise the scale and scope of '*Collision*'. When the intensity of '*Collision*' with feedback is diminished, the feedback information can be used to further learning in context-specific ways, then the effect of feedback becomes a catalyst to action and reflection.

The '*catalytic*' power of feedback is impacted by accessibility of information and the degree to which the learner perceives it as representative of their current needs. Repeated instances of feedback acting as a catalyst to both internal, and external paths of feedback, and to reflection in and on action, have the potential to stimulate transformative learning. At the point that the TL trainees became aware of the potential of feedback as a transformative process, they look for this capacity and use feedback in ways not connected with one specific task. Whilst the point at which this awareness began to impact on the effect of feedback is not overtly identifiable, it is clear that none of the TL trainees articulated this awareness during the initial round of telephone interviews or the second telephone interview point. At the third and fourth points of telephone interview data collection (Figure 4, p. 75) all of the TL trainees had constructed understandings about new and more complex concepts of feedback and its role in learning.

The figure below illustrates varying impact and power along the learner's journey to transformative learning.

DIAGRAM REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Figure 12: Impact of Feedback on the learner.

### ***The Variable Power of Feedback***

When feedback has provided transformation of levels of participation, caused some concepts to be remodelled and increased levels of risk-taking in learning, two things seem possible. 1.) The learner may continue to have further successful interactions with effective feedback, eventually resulting in further transformative change, or 2.) A particular feedback experience ‘collides’ with sufficient impact to prevent or interrupt the movement towards transformative learning. Returning to the successful instance above, feedback sources which contribute to the continued process of transformative change may be internal or external. The feedback providing internal paths of information may be from peers, leaders of the learning or from other elements, such as the RR teachers in training or the children being taught. Whether the learner passes through these impact phases

exclusively and progressively is not clear. However, as I described above, impact may continue productively resulting in further transformative change. This would seem to imply that the effect on the learner is oscillating between impact being catalytic and transformational. This in turn suggests that the power of feedback for a given learner is between a maximum of two impact levels at any feedback instance. However, it is also possible that a particular feedback experience can result solely in further impact that impedes the quality of learning arising from that instance, as I go on to describe.

### *Recursive impact*

Not every instance of receiving feedback after learners have reached the point of being able to use feedback as a catalyst, results in transformative change. The data shows that extreme responses can result in getting stuck at the reacting phase, not being able to depersonalise it sufficiently to leave behind the emotional responses sufficiently to make it useable in learning. For example, Charlie had begun to move to a less emotionally received model of feedback which allowed her to make it useful for her learning and had become *“less personally attached to it...I think I mean I receive it less personally.....this goes and I can take it on more easily.....less emotional in my response.....less connected to personality...this goes and I can take what I need from it more easily.....this can take me a long time”* (Charlie/TLT3/Int). But at a later point, she returned to a state where she received the feedback personally and this rendered her unable to use the feedback for her learning. She felt she had *“nothing left to hold on to .. this has left me with nothing - it exploded, exploded in my head. But I couldn’t find what I needed in it easily, I had got used to how it worked, or how I thought it worked. I took it as a judgement on being a human being, but now I distance it. I still have to work on my*

*reactions to this.... you know, the RM feedback left me badly scarred'*(Charlie/TLT4/Int).

She relates her feelings of insecurity to previous feedback experiences. She still responds in similar ways when she anticipates one thing based on her previous experiences but the feedback delivers another. However, now she is aware of this reaction and can guard against it preventing future learning. In this instance, the form in which the feedback information had been communicated to her had changed. Due to the distances between the course venue and the TL participants' homes, feedback after the course had finished had to be emailed. This resulted in two clear differences with previous feedback from the course team. This particular instance of feedback did not have an accompanying session in which meaning was mediated. In addition, email contact meant that some comments were embedded in the text of the reflective writing, as opposed to the previous course practice of using post-its<sup>36</sup> which can be removed and so perhaps less like the forms of marking which wrote directly onto their written work, that they may have experienced prior to the TL preparation course.

### *Perspective transformation of feedback*

As described in Chapters Five, Six and this chapter, both a somewhat unique within-learner reaction, and the learning environment, initially shape the learner-feedback interaction. This determines the degree of reaction or '*Collision*'.

'*Collision*' would seem to be diminished as levels of trust are increased and as previous experiences with feedback are 'reprogrammed' by the experiences of feedback which is constructive, recursive and reciprocal (see Chapter Five).

Feedback is individually interpreted and so each individual has the potential to

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<sup>36</sup> Self-adhesive post-its had been used alongside a feedback narrative to locate the comments in the text (or in the case file details, lesson records etc.).

use the feedback information to catalyse action and in a unique and different way than other course participants. This may mean that the reflective processes incorporated into the point at which feedback instigates action are also uniquely determined. Since reflection may be one of the crucial processes making action transformative, if feedback opportunities rarely happen, transformative change is less likely. One of the roles of feedback is to act as a kind of insurance policy for transformative change. The next section goes on to discuss this idea in more detail.

#### *A key outcome*

The nature of knowledge is not static across the activity bases and roles of a RR Teacher Leader. Therefore, in order to work effectively and manage change at the teacher and system level in their own locality, a perspective transformation has to occur. Firstly, this transformation has to involve the way knowledge is constructed and reflected on in order to build effective learning environments. This involves the explicit use of feedback as a tool for learning. Secondly, the ways in which the professional seeks out and integrates internal and external paths of feedback have to change in order to continue to fulfil the complex role of RR TL in a fluid and changing world of in service teacher education where demands *‘centre around the high levels of uncertainty experienced by leaders, their staff and, indeed, the whole organization... today’* (van Maurik, 2001, p. 75). Therefore, complex professional learning environments need to offer more than learning as knowledge.

The role of leader of the learning is diverse within the transformative learning perspective. Mezirow (1997) characterises teaching action as helping the learner

identify and examine the assumptions that underlie their beliefs, feelings and actions. The learner may need to be supported as they assess the consequences of their assumptions, leading to the exploration of alternative sets of assumptions. The role of effective participation in reflective dialogue is key in the view of leader of the learning and learner interaction.

The discussion above points to some important aims for professional learning environments. Placing the learner at the centre of their own learning is instrumental in developing an awareness of one's perceptions and how those perceptions relate to and resource learning and contribute to transformation (Cranton, 1994). This highlights the importance of group dialogue in mediating meaning making and interpretations of learning, as this dialogue represents interaction between some key aspects of perspective transformation. These aspects are critically reflective dialogue, validation of existing assumptions and beliefs, and the practical and theoretical demonstration of new assumptions and beliefs. Professional learning environments need to take account of this when planning task contexts and opportunities for discourse.

Within this study context, feedback is the starting point for dialogue, between Trainers and TLs Trainees and amongst the TL trainees. The discussion of feelings and emotions alongside practice and experience may contribute to the depth of experience felt by the TL trainee participants. Feedback is constructed around both practical activity and critical reflection. TLs participate in a programme that interweaves theories of early literacy development (within the experience of 'live-lesson critique' of RR lessons and visits to their own teaching) and adult learning (within the context of the RR teacher training groups). Practical experiences involve growth of formal and practical knowledge.

Given that responsibility for change ultimately lies with the learner (Saavedra, 1996), feedback creates the conditions of change both externally and internally. Feedback can provide the ‘disorienting dilemmas’ essential for perspective transformation. Processing emotions is an essential pre-requisite to critical reflection, particularly self-reflection. However, dilemma alone is not enough. Perspective transformation also involves greater feelings of confidence and self-worth and as we have seen in this chapter, feedback contributes to those feelings, both implicitly and explicitly. The feedback process has considerable potential and greater understanding of how it functions within a given learning context is needed to avoid lost opportunity.

RR TLs have the professional role of acting as transforming leaders (Burns, 1978). This means that they need to be visionary leaders of teachers seeking to provide learning for teachers which “*moves them toward higher and more universal needs and purposes*’ (Bolman & Deal 1997, p. 314). Viewing perspective transformation as a goal of the TL professional preparation has implications for the RR organisation as a whole. In order for organisations to sustain themselves, the values, interests and capabilities of their members are very important. Organisations have maximum potential for improvement if the learners in that organisation are empowered to learn from feedback. The learner-leader distinction would diminish as the newcomers progress toward being fully active within the organisation (Burns, 1978; Rost, 1991).

### ***Summary***

Feedback can have a transformative effect on the learner. Perspective transformation occurs as a result of feedback experiences. This is by no means a

natural or assumed progression. It occurs only when the learner intensity of collision allows multiple instances of double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978) to occur. Triple loop learning seems to correspond to the sorts of learning occurring during the phase when feedback has a catalytic effect on the learner (see Chapter Six). However, the goal of complex professional learning is for perspective transformation to occur. It involves transforming who we are and how we learn by creating a shift in our conceptual understanding of our context and our stance and our knowledge. The change may happen gradually or all of a sudden and seems to be uniquely constructed. But in this particular context, we will never be the same. When the learning following feedback is transformative, it also involves the purposeful engagement with emotions to ensure that the maximum power of feedback is available to the learner. This theme is continued Chapter Eight, along with the argument that feedback should be understood not only as product and process, but also as curriculum within a curriculum.



## **Chapter Eight: Feedback as a Socially Situated Personal Curriculum**

### *Introduction*

Feedback can stimulate a transformation of both concept of feedback and a concept of oneself as a learner. This might have been viewed as a triple loop learning process (Argyris & Schön, 1978); learning which represents a shift in both level of cognition and perspective on the nature of knowing. However, the learning transformation that has occurred in the setting for this study seems to have involved an additional aspect. Part of the transformation process has additionally shifted perspectives on the emotions of learning and how to re-direct them in order to get the maximum power from feedback opportunities. This relates to ideas of learning as using certain intellectual and cultural processes that shape how we make sense of the world (Egan, 1997).

The transformation process seemed to be represented by around three core categories of change; '*Collision*', corresponding to the disorientation or shock typically stimulating future perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1997). The feedback acts as a '*Catalyst*' for action and reflection. This phase is closest to triple loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978). There is then a third phase where the power of feedback has the potential to stimulate '*Transformative*' change, not only of learning but of values, attitudes and beliefs within that context. Feedback stimulates learning related to triple loop learning as it is a process to promote the development of feedback routes from inter-psychological to intra-psychological. However, learning stimulated in the '*Transformative*' stage has more power than triple loop learning alone because it involves the integration of emotions and how to use them so that they do not impede learning. This idea of feedback that develops the intertwined aspects of cognition and emotion might be conceptualised as learning how to learn alongside the added dimension of

learning how to use feedback to learn. The capacity of curriculum design and experiences to achieve perspective transformation may be of particular importance to professional learning environments as the resulting transformations may need to support ‘agents of change’ (Fullan, 1991), as discussed in Chapter Three. Curriculum, process and pedagogy should be designed with the purpose and designation of learner in mind (Egan, 1997). Feedback may additionally act as a means of personalising organisational and situated learning. Feedback purposes and potentials have to be mutually understood to avoid the extremes of reaction – joint meaning making minimises ‘disturbance’ though may not eradicate it altogether. I claim that this transformative learning and perspective transformation is occurring in a feedback curriculum within a professional curriculum, where feedback becomes understood and appropriated as product and process. The definition of curriculum underpinning this discussion is the representation of learning experiences, planned and unplanned, formal and informal, including three aspects; curriculum as designed, curriculum in action and curriculum as experienced (Coles, 2003).

This chapter presents the thesis argument that feedback in a higher professional learning context can usefully function as its own co-constructive curriculum within the wider professional curriculum. This is in addition to feedback as process and product. In the first section, I consider how feedback works as curriculum in addition to product and process. Next, I discuss how this curriculum is designed to meet the needs of already-expert professional learners in this context. Subsequently, I characterise the feedback curriculum being experienced as a journey for all participants to take account of the recursive, reciprocal elements of feedback described in this study. Finally, I review the

goals of the thesis and demonstrate they have been achieved. I also comment on the contribution of this thesis and make suggestions for additional research in the area. I conclude with a brief summary.

### *A feedback curriculum*

I have previously presented feedback as process and product. Feedback can also be considered of itself as a powerful curriculum working within a curriculum. I define the term curriculum as a means of articulating and realising social vision, combining action and reflection in the form of praxis (Grundy, 1987).

Curriculum is therefore not just a syllabus, a course, or a list of learning objectives but a way of both planning activity and communicating purpose. This is strongly supported by the analysis of findings, where feedback is experienced, used for further learning by the learner and learned for future use within the culture, used for further planning and feedback by the leader of the learning and used for communicating culture. A curriculum for the already-expert professional cannot be reduced to objectives and standards alone, since it cannot be removed from the context and cultural practices in which it occurs (Stenhouse, 1975). The expert professional already has a great deal of professional knowledge and experience. The curriculum in this study context has to steer the learner towards ways of thinking and being that protect the integrity of joint enterprise, and that actively search for advocacy opportunities. Curriculum when defined as what is to be learned, does not fully acknowledge this situated knowledge. Neither can curriculum be thought of as process alone. As Cornbleth (1990) and Jeffs and Smith (1990, 1999) have argued, curriculum cannot be taken out of context, and understood away from the language and purposes of that context. Alter the

context and the process changes. Therefore, a feedback curriculum for the already-expert learner should be thought of as distinct within that setting and be concerned with what needs to be learned and how it is learned within that context. A key outcome for professional learning is optimising internal and external paths of feedback and associated reflective processes, as discussed in Chapter Seven. This key outcome develops through the experiences surrounding the giving and receiving of feedback. Therefore feedback acts as a curriculum, which articulates how learning and reflection are achieved in this context. This is clearly demonstrated in the data. ‘Holding off’ final performance in the form of summative evaluation by using rounds of feedback activity to both written and practical activity is how this feedback curriculum succeeds in powering learning. Activities and their timing are designed to make optimum use of the potential power of feedback to energise learning and transform perspective on that learning. The feedback curriculum pays careful attention to collective understandings and mediates personal meaning making, as seen in the reflective dialogue occurring in feedback seminars. The feedback curriculum is potentially a powerful element of learning for already-expert learners in particular, since development to self-teaching and self-monitoring dialogue creates potential for on-going self-stimulated learning and adjustment of performance. A feedback curriculum is also potentially seminal for learners who are being prepared for roles as change agents, as self-feedback systems are essential in the socio-political context of advocating for a systemic early literacy intervention. The feedback curriculum is committed to practice by exploring practice and reflecting on practice, thus providing opportunities to make meaning around that practice. Therefore, the commitment to the learner is expressed in actions, in the way that

feedback gives centrality to the learner. This demonstrates perceptions of the learner as active and co-constructive. A key goal of the feedback curriculum is that the learner should seek and effectively utilise sources of feedback information. The capacity to use external and internal feedback paths is developed and ultimately transformed by external feedback itself. Conceptualising feedback as a curriculum necessitates a consideration of the design and context, which would allow a feedback curriculum to assist in reaching overall goals for individual learners and the culture itself. I discuss this next.

### *Responsive*

Feedback as a curriculum gives attention to the learner and their perspective, acknowledging the unplanned, unexpected and sometimes individually experienced incident that turns out to be pivotal in the learner's lived experience. A curriculum for already-expert learners gives increased importance to what the learner brings to the task. A curriculum in which a feedback curriculum sits needs be responsive. This approach to curriculum gives maximum opportunity for using feedback as a source of information for both the teacher and learner. An approach of personal relevance (Eisner, 1970) is of paramount importance in the case of already-expert learners. Achieving a personally relevant curriculum is key in providing feedback experiences, which are understood and linked to future professional roles. Feedback is a further way in which personal relevance is communicated to the learner. Appraisal of how personal relevance is achieved and communicated to learners would be helpful to curriculum review for already-expert professional learning contexts.

### *Socially Situated*

A feedback curriculum enables communication of the essential principles of community and culture (Stenhouse, 1975). The goal of the curriculum in which it exists would be to enculturate or prepare learners for a particular role, and have elements of social adaptation and reconstruction (Eisner, 1970). It should concentrate on the knowledge skills, attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are essential in the success of the community. A feedback curriculum uniquely allows interaction of existing current ways of thinking and doing with community valued ways in overt and mediated ways. Therefore, the curriculum containing feedback as an embedded curriculum would envisage evaluation of learners as concerned with more than what has been taught. By creating assessment tasks that represent real-life performance, the feedback curriculum can powerfully engage with thought, action and purpose.

### *Spiralling*

This description is not meant to imply that the same content is reviewed repeatedly. The spiralling quality of curriculum implies that as similar contexts or experiences are revisited, learners conceptualise them in more sophisticated ways; to understand the task differently, behave more critically, or in this case context, to view it from the perspective of future professional role. Therefore, revisiting is at a greater depth than previous instances as the feedback spirals increase in scope. A feedback curriculum within this spiralling curriculum is the means by which reviewing and reflecting are propelled to be conducted at a higher level. A feedback curriculum uses the opportunities presented by a spiral curriculum to drive learning forward, increasing in complexity and sophistication.

### *Components of the curriculum*

The feedback curriculum cannot be categorised into discrete elements, though the course documents set out activities that act as context in which the curriculum locates. This curriculum centres on a means through which one uses one's environment to identify what needs to be done to improve and interact with conflicting forces. How does that curriculum achieve its goal? One way is through the use of processes and tools to respond to learners and their activity. Feedback tools can be pedagogical, conceptual and cultural. The feedback process combines these devices in increasing complexity,<sup>37</sup> working not only for higher cognition and performance within the learning context, but also for the development of internal paths of feedback.

Feedback is a dialogic process as part of a feedback curriculum, building learning and motivation, contributing to individuals' feelings of self worth and representing culture. Through feedback, learners become aware of what this learning community stands for. This cultural information includes values, attitudes, beliefs and practices. The opportunity to learn from feedback and put that feedback information into action is important, since concepts of learners and learning will also be communicated here. It is through lived experience that some of these beliefs and attitudes become internalised and therefore appropriated for future resource.

Feedback can be thought of as a process in several ways. It functions as a series of actions that have the goal of change in both performance and learner capacity to learn from feedback, both internally and externally provided. It is also not just a physical episode, but an interaction of learners, teachers and knowledge in that

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<sup>37</sup> The increase in complexity is achieved by the strategies (tools) working in unique combination to respond to the learner, as discussed in Chapter Five.



setting. It is an active process by which Trainers, the leaders of the learning in this context, use feedback to evaluate their own teaching, including their previous feedback and prepare for further teaching and feedback cycles. It is also the process by which the pedagogic, conceptual and cultural tools of the learning community are appropriated by new members. In many ways, the feedback process resembles the practical reasoning that is the result of practical action in and on action (Freire, 1972). It is a process that begins without a defined, concrete and uniform starting point. The learners are what they are, and bring a somewhat unique prior knowledge, experience, personality and cultural identity to the learning community. In order to be as effective and powerful as its potential allows, feedback as process has to empower the leaders of the learning in that setting to engage in a constant and ongoing process of theory making and theory testing. To explicate this idea a little further, consider all that the Trainer brings to the task of teaching the TL trainees; personal constructs of teaching; experience both in this community and in others; knowledge of content; knowledge of standards; expertise and personal experiences of feedback; and knowledge of the learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Feedback processes have to allow these fluid constructs to be reflected in performance; both practical and written, and responded to by realignment of both personal feedback and future teaching action, in order to ensure accelerative power is reached. This complex feedback process engages learners and leaders of the learning on a continuous feedback spiral toward continuous improvement. Therefore, feedback processes that are bi-directional in potential provide the greatest opportunity for both learners and leaders of the learning to actively engage with feedback and provide the most powerful feedback for learning. Feedback processes that extend the path

to final performance create greater capacity and potential for learning through feedback.

These processes have an outcome in the form of a feedback product. The outcome of a feedback process is something recognisable as feedback in its own right. This feedback product generated through activity could be oral or written, summative or formative, planned or unplanned. However, the concept of feedback as a product in this complex learning environment is not as simple as a feedback document. It represents the unique product of interaction between learner and leader of the learning, and is a continuation of the idea of feedback as an active and bi-directional process.

The next section continues by concluding on how feedback is received as lived experience.

### ***Journeying with Feedback***

Feedback experiences in this case setting took on the meaning of a journey, a rite of passage for the participants in this study. It was something they all shared and bound them together as a learning group within a learning community. They understood feedback to have impacted not only on their learning, but also on the concepts of learning and feedback. The interaction between learners, leaders of the learning and environment as experienced had transformed their perspective on what they as learners, and as leaders of learning might expect to contribute to the socially situated learning environment. Many comments talked about shifts as if they themselves had moved or changed in some way. For some, the perspectives on the learning community goals hadn't changed. They had deepened and broadened their knowledge in ways one would expect. However, whilst the ways

of talking about it related to moving, the movement itself is not linear or in one direction. This was represented in the meaning made by talking about different perspectives on previous experiences, now interpreting experiences and activities in different ways, *“looking with new eyes”* (Kym/TLT2/Int).

The participants in this context had experiences in common with the teachers they would go on to work with, becoming the leaders of their learning. This led to internalising some guiding principles for the effective use of feedback.

Interestingly, much of the meaning made about learning from personal experiences was concerned with the management of the emotions of learning and how those emotions could act as barrier or promoter of learning. This represents two aspects of meaning. Firstly, that a transformation of perspectives is inevitably an integration of emotion and learning. Change at a personal level involves introspection and re-formation of cognition and affective aspects, which is often uncomfortable. Secondly, in ways particular to ‘change agents’, the goals of the preparation course were intertwined with the strength of their commitment to the social vision of the enterprise. It mattered a great deal that they achieve in ways necessary to do a good job ‘in the field’ so feedback became a more emotional experience than it might have if following a traditional academic Master’s course. The role of motivation, as linked to purpose and activity, increasingly becoming culturally coded, with the aim of motivation becoming internally validated, is important here. This conclusion is of wider interest for professional learning contexts leading to a change of identity and professional designation.

The feedback curriculum, functioning as process and product was perceived to have powerful effects on the speed of learning and on the development towards perspective transformation. Feedback as received also affected multiple aspects

of the lived experience of professional learning, both during the lifetime of the course, and on into continuing professional contact within this learning community. The next section considers how this thesis has contributed to an understanding of the power of feedback in professional learning.

### *Contribution of the thesis*

This study set out to explore the role of feedback to complex professional learning. It aimed to consider aspects of learning involving change in understanding of feedback, both giving and receiving, during and after the professional preparation for RR TLs and how the feedback process was contributory to learning. The design of case study, using the methods of telephone interviews, group focus interview, participant observations of peer teaching, written examples of feedback, course documentation and research diary, provided the data context for exploration. Data analysis using the steps of the constant comparative method has enabled some new insights into how feedback can power up learning. I explored the personal meaning making during a course designed for already expert learners, exploring how feedback changes to respond to the learner. I then developed a grounded description of feedback which brings together the learner and teacher perspectives. The thesis adds to existing descriptions of feedback as part of assessment for learning and provides some further insights that are potentially useful for curriculum and course design for professional learning.

Feedback has previously been considered effective if it meets the learners' needs (Guskey, 2001) as discussed in Chapter Two. This study provides evidence of feedback evolving to respond to changes in learner cognition. It also reveals the

importance of shared understandings about the role of feedback in learning and identifies an early role for feedback in ‘acculturating’ learners to feedback processes. Feedback’s role in preparing learners to fulfill potential power of feedback has not previously been articulated. Consideration of how feedback is used at the beginning of professional learning that aims to create transformatory learning would seem to be important if the potential and power of feedback is to be realized.

The suggested conceptual structure of feedback loops returning to their source (Roos & Hamilton, 2004) does not account for the change in the learner that is occurring as part of learning at a fast pace. This learner-change is an important factor in planning feedback opportunities. If feedback dialogue is designed for return to an unchanged source, feedback power is lost. Feedback opportunities have to be frequent enough to accommodate the learner as changing in knowledge and capacity. Therefore, I suggest feedback spirals as an appropriate structure for feedback processes for professional learning that are accelerative in nature. This conclusion has implications for timing of feedback points. In addition to the possible recursive movement, it draws attention to the continuous and causal role of feedback, with feedback opportunities being regular and closely linked in time to the action being fed back on. This would seem to be important if feedback is to become a resource to self-teaching mechanisms.

Considering feedback as a dialogic process accounts for how information gathered in spirals is fed into learning. The analysis of feedback demonstrated that feedback devices were responsive to the needs of the learner, as represented in activity. The information in feedback was therefore judged to be in the zone of proximal development for each learner, representing what is possible when

guided by an 'expert other'. Feedback information became incorporated into learning, both in terms of reflection and practical action. Acting upon feedback led to greater understanding of feedback as well as higher cognition. The feedback process involves exchange of information (Roos & Hamilton, 2004), as bi-directional movement. This provides a stream of information back to the learner to shape and guide future thinking and activity, and to the leader of the learning to adjust future teaching and learning activity to more closely align with individual zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The feedback instances represented opportunities to power up the learning using feedback in two ways. Firstly, it gave opportunities to personalized and individualized learning information. Therefore, the feedback dialogued with each learner responsively, providing information to move him or her on as swiftly as possible. The feedback dialogue developed, and kept pace with the performance and cultural knowledge of each learner. Secondly, it gave opportunities to gather information about effectiveness of teaching and prior feedback instances. This led to further dialogue opportunities used to realign experience and input to the exact learning needs of learners. Capacity to provide personalised dialogue on an ongoing and regular basis would seem of paramount importance for professional learners recruited from a range of contexts, with differing learner needs and prior experiences, particularly if engaged on a professional path of role transformation. My conclusions bring into focus the design and context of tasks that place emphasis on the potential of spirals of feedback. The idea of feedback as 'spirals' implies that each feedback point extends conceptual understanding and reflective capacity. Therefore, tasks used as the structure of those spirals would need to allow the application of theoretical concepts to be demonstrated, thus bridging the

gap between theory and practice. Tasks may usefully seek to personalise, the learning around common experiences within a multi dimensional model, promoting higher cognition. This route to higher cognition may be achieved by having a series of foci for the evaluation points, which increase in level of complexity and conceptual understanding needed. Using common experiences as foci for practical and written activity provide an opportunity for the development of key skills such as communication, group working and problem solving. These are also important in stimulating perspective transformation.

The importance of the self-management of affective redirection to support perspective transformation indicates the importance of establishing, and maintaining, engagement with the topic or activity and hence desire to learn. This points to the need for problem based learning around realistic and meaningful problems in that setting or culture. These points demonstrate the importance of learning through being an ‘insider’ or co-constructor of cultural environments. The context of tasks and ways of re-presenting those real-life experiences as learning need to allow the critique of practice by capturing sufficient information to reflect upon what occurred. This in turn may assist active learning and engagement.

### *Dissemination of findings*

The study has identified some interesting aspects, which inform as to the relationship of feedback to both cognition and emotion. Opportunities to engage in reflection on the importance of emotional learning within professional learning and using emotion in ways that are productive to cognition, may be time consuming but are integral to the power of feedback. The concept of feedback as

a curriculum in its own right, embedded within a broader curriculum is important in reviewing course tasks and assessment cycles. I will provide an executive summary for my Trainer team colleagues in UK and in RR contexts beyond. I will include discussion of findings in annual and ongoing curriculum review.

This study has provided some useful insights for the wider community concerned with complex professional learning. Feedback has potential power for learning, but in order to harness that power, opportunities to increase accessibility and meaning making surrounding the role of feedback in learning are paramount. It has also raised the importance of feedback in communicating heritage.

Opportunities to disseminate my findings more widely by presenting seminars and writing papers for peer reviewed publications will be important to communicate these ideas amongst the higher education community.

This thesis will have an impact in my own professional field, especially the professional preparation of Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders. This has potential for worldwide dissemination through the International Reading Recovery Trainer Organization.

### *Suggestions for new research*

Further research into the learning contexts for change agents would provide further insight into the particular learning and perspective transformations, which occur as part of professional preparation. Clearly, learning in this context is considerably more than knowledge acquisition. Exploration of curriculum design for professional preparation for professionals to manage change at practice, praxis and attitudinal levels would seem valuable.



Also of interest is the capacity of higher education learning contexts designed to take account of the learner's needs, including affect. In this study context, tasks for evaluation are focused on learning around realistic and meaningful problems. These practical and lived experiences then resource further activity of greater complexity and conceptual understanding. It would be useful to investigate approaches to and processes for engagement and active learning in other professional learning contexts.

This study has focused on participants who were currently undertaking, or had recently completed, a professional learning preparation. An aspect worthy of further exploration is the maintenance of internal paths of feedback. It is not clear whether it is possible to maintain current levels of 'self-feedback' without continuing and further transformative experiences triggered from an external contributor. It may be that continuing learning as part of a learning community is an essential aspect of 'feedback top-up', triggering further perspective transformations.

### ***Summary***

Feedback in professional learning environments is a seminal aspect of learning experience that stimulates perspective and learning transformations. This is particularly important for professional learning for change agents, charged with advocating for educational innovations not yet part of accepted educational practice. Feedback takes on several roles, reflected in the levels of use; product, process, catalyst to transformation and curriculum within a curriculum. Potential power comes from feedback's capacity to act as motivator of learners, system of exchange of information and accelerator of learning. However, potential power is

affected in two key ways. (i) Feedback has to be mutually understood by both learner and teacher if extremes of reaction, felt as collision, are to be avoided. Opportunities to mediate meaning making around feedback experiences minimise degree of impact though may not eradicate it altogether. (ii) Feedback needs to be structured as cycles around activity, giving opportunity to 'hold off' summative evaluation. These further iterations give opportunity to move towards more culturally coded and embedded language, responding to current cognition as reflected in the task and knowledge of the learner in broader contexts.

Feedback as a curriculum of experienced feedback practices and processes, used as resource for further learning and learned for future use is a novel theoretical idea. A feedback curriculum supports transformative learning goals and has a role in enculturating learners into cultural meanings and understandings of feedback. Feedback is also a vehicle to move from external to internal paths of reflective feedback. My claims impact on other models of professional learning; feedback which is motivational, acts as a system of information exchange and therefore accelerative, has the potential to manage affect in productive ways. The design of the feedback curriculum needs to involve the integration of cognition, emotions and how to redirect them, so as not impede the learning acceleration made possible through feedback.

This study has drawn attention to the potentially powerful role of feedback in professional learning. I conclude that the combined and interactive roles of product, process and curriculum make feedback a potentially powerful component of professional learning curriculum design.

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## *Appendices*

## **Appendix One: Three levels of Training**

(Taken from Standards and Guidelines for Reading Recovery, 2004)

Training for Reading Recovery Teachers is a one-year, part-time course, which interweaves theoretical understanding and practical experience.

During the year of training a teacher is required to work with at least four children at any one time on an individual basis, for half an hour every day during which teachers will need to be freed from other responsibilities. Allowing for record keeping, the time commitment to Reading Recovery during the year of training is approximately 0.5, of which the majority of time is spent working in the teacher's own school, teaching individual children.

Following an intensive training in observation and assessment in the first two weeks of the course, the teacher is required to attend in-service training sessions for half a day, fortnightly. These are in addition to the daily teaching commitment; there is an expectation that teachers will teach their pupils prior to attendance at in-service sessions, so that the children's patterns of daily lessons are not interrupted.

### **ESSENTIAL STANDARDS FOR A TEACHER TRAINING COURSE**

The training course has certain critical features without which the quality of the experience for teachers is likely to be so seriously compromised as to undermine the effectiveness of the programme and jeopardise the status of the course within the Reading Recovery trademark. The Reading Recovery training course is designed to develop teachers' ability to reflect upon and critically evaluate

teaching decisions, in order to determine the most accelerative moves for individual pupils, the hallmark of Reading Recovery teaching.

- §§ Teacher training must be delivered by a qualified Teacher Leader (Tutor) in a recognised training site. The training must adhere to the principles of Reading Recovery and follow the framework for the recognised course using prescribed core texts (currently ‘Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training’ [Clay1993a], ‘An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement’, second edition [Clay 2002] and ‘Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control [Clay 1991]).
- §§ Training must include opportunities to observe live teaching using a one-way screen, in order to provide a range of teaching situations which reflect the issues facing teachers in their own area, and to foster teachers ability to analyse and critically evaluate teaching moves and children’s learning.
- §§ These skills are best developed when the teacher training group has between 10 – 12 teachers which ensures a manageable share of responsibility for teaching live lessons and contributing to discussion. In exceptional circumstances, in order to allow for the needs of particular individuals in particular circumstances, a group could reduce to a minimum of 8 or increase to a maximum of 14, but this should be negotiated with the National Co-ordinators.

Teachers accepted for Reading Recovery training must have qualified teacher status.

Teachers must fulfil all the requirements of the course in order to receive Reading Recovery Teacher Certification.

### **IN-SERVICE SESSIONS:**

In-service sessions should include two Reading Recovery lessons taught behind a one-way screen, which are observed, analysed and discusses by the group.

Following these lessons, a more in-depth discussion guides the teachers from issues raised by the lessons into an examination of appropriate texts, from shared experience to a greater theoretical understanding.

In-service sessions also give practical advice for the implementation of Reading Recovery in schools, and provide opportunities for teachers to share their individual concerns and experiences.

Further support, tailored to the particular needs of the individual teacher and school, is provided by four to six Teacher Leader (TL) visits to the teachers' school during the year of training. By observing lessons and giving detailed, specific guidance, and through liaison with key personnel in the school team, the TL is able to support Reading Recovery and strengthen the implementation of the programme in the school. Training in observation and assessment techniques is also provided for another member of the school team, the school link teacher.

Teachers who meet the Reading Recovery course requirements are awarded a course completion certificate, which is recorded on the National Register of Reading Recovery Teachers.

### **CONTINUING CONTACT:**

Reading Recovery teaching is intensive and highly focused. For a teacher working in a unique role within the school it can also be somewhat isolated. In order to maintain an effective, high quality implementation there is an expectation that teachers will receive further professional development through a minimum of six Continuing Contact sessions each year and annual TL and colleague visits for as long as they are teaching Reading Recovery.

Continuing Contact sessions are more collegial in nature than in-service sessions and draw teachers into a greater depth of theoretical understanding and analysis. Observation and discussion of two lessons remains a central feature of Continuing Contact sessions but discussion is at a higher level of understanding and teachers may draw upon a wider range of texts to support their thinking.

### **TRAINING TEACHER LEADERS**

Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders (TLs) need to be highly skilled practitioners of Reading Recovery techniques, adept facilitators of teachers' professional development and proficient administrators of a complex and detailed intervention in an education system.

Training for Reading Recovery TLs is an intensive course based at and accredited by the University of London, Institute of Education at Master's level, which involves one full-time year and one year of part-time study.

In order to learn how to implement an effective Reading Recovery programme with the hardest to teach children, Teacher Leader trainees teach four children individually every day throughout the training year. At regular training sessions TLs in training participate in observation, analysis and discussion arising from two live lessons behind the one-way screen. Using the appropriate texts they develop a high level of familiarity with and understanding of the teaching procedures. Further individual support is provided for TLs in training through half-termly Trainer visits to observe individual teaching and to give detailed, specific guidance.

Training is given in planning, preparing, delivering and evaluating the inservice course for teachers. Trainees begin by observing experienced TLs at In-service sessions and, by gently increasing their level of participation, gradually take more responsibility for in-service sessions.

In seminars, lectures and tutorials, trainees explore theoretical understandings underpinning the Reading Recovery programme and the research evidence upon which it is based. They learn how to examine and critically evaluate academic papers including those, which challenge the programme.

Towards the end of the full-time year, TLs in training are supported in moves to prepare for implementation in their Education Authority, as appropriate. In the year after training new TLs are given an enhanced level of support to enable them to introduce the programme into their particular situation and to develop their TL role.

### **ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

Reading Recovery teaching and training is intensive and highly focused. For a TL working in what is often a unique role within an Education Authority it can also be very isolated. Reading Recovery is a dynamic programme and it is very important that TLs keep abreast of current theoretical debate and practice. In order to maintain an effective, high quality implementation in an authority, it is essential that TLs receive ongoing professional development through Trainer and colleague visits. TLs also attend a Professional Development course for five days annually for as long as they are delivering Reading Recovery teacher training and Continuing Contact support.

Teacher Leader professional development meetings\*:

Annually this includes a five-day [or equivalent] intensive, residential course during which TLs have the opportunity to:

- § Be updated and discuss their reading of relevant research, theory and opinion.
- § Explore and develop their knowledge and understanding of Reading Recovery teaching procedures at their own level.

- ☞ Address implementation issues at national and local levels.
- ☞ Build up and draw upon the network of colleague support among trained Teacher Leaders in similar and diverse situations.

\*Associated travel and accommodation costs should be built into the annual Reading Recovery budget.

### **TRAINING TRAINERS:**

The training of Reading Recovery Trainers generally requires a one year, full-time and second year part-time course at higher degree level. It also includes the teaching of children in a Reading Recovery programme. The co-ordination of Trainers is undertaken by the National Network for Reading Recovery and the decision to train is taken at national level.

In 2001 the Institute of Education, University of London became internationally accredited and began its Trainer training programme. This is a doctoral level course.

Training of Trainers is also available in New Zealand and the USA (Ohio State University and Texas Woman's University).

Trainer ongoing professional development is provided internationally through the 'International Reading Recovery Trainer Organisation' (IRRTTO).



## **Appendix Two: Course Description**

(taken from MA LLLD(professional route) course Handbook)

### **COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE**

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#### **2.1 Course aims**

The course aims to train Teacher Leaders for Reading Recovery in the UK and abroad. It aims to equip participants with relevant knowledge and understanding about current research in early literacy, the theories of Marie Clay underpinning Reading Recovery, the skills required to manage an implementation in a local education authority or education system and the ability to lead high quality professional development for practising teachers.

#### **2.2 Course rationale**

Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders (TLs) need to be highly skilled practitioners of Reading Recovery techniques, adept facilitators of teachers' professional development and proficient administrators of a complex and detailed intervention in an education system.

#### **2.3 Learning outcomes**

To train Teacher Leaders to organise, implement and evaluate an early literacy intervention (Reading Recovery). To achieve this, you will have to:

- develop or enhance your understandings about how the lowest achieving children can be assisted to overcome their literacy difficulties

- explore and develop your understandings of Clay's theory of literacy acquisition which underpins Reading Recovery
- have a thorough knowledge of a range of other theoretical approaches to literacy development, difficulties and intervention
- have a good knowledge of recent research on early literacy
- understand the principles of effective professional development for adults
- be able to plan and deliver an effective in-service course for teachers
- have sufficient understanding of Reading Recovery to be a competent teacher/practitioner
- be able to reflect on the experience of a change process which challenges many assumptions
- be able to present information about Reading Recovery to different audiences (teachers, administrators, parents, educational psychologists, etc.)
- be able to organise resources to deliver and monitor a Reading Recovery implementation within an education authority and maintain the quality of this implementation.

## **2.4 Intended participants**

Participants are experienced practitioners who will be preparing and supporting teachers to deliver Reading Recovery in schools. These practitioners work for a

Local Education Authority (in the UK) or Education System (in Ireland) and whilst they are studying are supported by their Local Authority.

## **2.5 Course structure**

The course requires full-time attendance for one year. A second year of part-time study will also be required to permit completion of the Report that will usually be submitted at the end of the second year. There are four modules, three completed during the first year and the fourth (the Report) completed during the following part-time year of study. None of the three modules of the first year is optional.

During the second year you will be expected to work as a Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, training a group of teachers, and will continue to receive supervision and support from a National Trainer/Coordinator on aspects of professional practice. Academic support for the Report will be provided, on a distance-learning basis.

## **2.6 Course organisation**

### **Year 1**

#### **The Theory and Practice of Reading Recovery (MMALLD\_01)**

This module is studied throughout the first year and earns credit equivalent to **three** 30-credit modules.

At the start of the year, the course will focus on children with literacy difficulties and how to teach them effectively using Reading Recovery procedures. While your teaching of children continues throughout the year, the emphasis within the

module moves to the professional development of teachers. Towards the end of the module, issues concerning the management of a Reading Recovery implementation are covered.

### **Teaching children**

Throughout the year, you will work daily with children, using Reading Recovery procedures and refining your understanding of them. Seminars at the Institute will enable you to reflect on your practice and to deepen your understanding of Clay's theory of early literacy. You will prepare **two case studies** selected to provide contrasting experiences of children with literacy problems.

You will observe teaching sessions and be prepared to teach for your colleagues, behind a one-way screen on up to two occasions during the year. This may mean that you will have to arrange for one of your children to be brought to the Institute or another training centre in a suitable location; travelling expenses will be reimbursed for these trips.

### **Learning to lead teachers**

There will be opportunities for you to observe teacher in-service sessions, led by a trained Teacher Leader at a Reading Recovery professional development centre. This may necessitate some additional travel, but we will try to take your needs into account when making these arrangements. You will discuss the progress of the training group in seminars at the Institute. You will also keep a diary of your observations of the training course and use these, together with reflections on your experiences as part of your portfolio, submitted at the end of Term 3.

As the year progresses, you will play a more active role as a Teacher Leader and will eventually participate in the planning and delivery of the in-service training course for teachers. You will also make two visits to teachers to observe their teaching in school and will give them feedback; you will first accompany an experienced Teacher Leader for this purpose before making a visit alone.

You will learn to manage an implementation in your education authority, including communicating with different audiences about Reading Recovery, advocacy, organisation and administration.

### **Research Methods in Literacy (MMALLD\_05)**

In term 1, this module will focus on giving you a firm grounding in research methods in literacy. This module is also part of the MA in Literacy Learning and Literacy Difficulties for those following the academic route. You will write a 4,000-word critique of some aspect of these research studies at the end of term 1.

### **Literacy Development (MMALLD\_02)**

In term 2, this module is also open to students from other Master's programmes. It is assessed by a written assignment of 4,000 words on some aspect of literacy acquisition.

### **Other Professional Development Opportunities**

There will be an opportunity for participants to attend a residential professional development meeting that is organised for all Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders

in the UK and Ireland. This is planned for March 2007 in Limerick, Republic of Ireland. Further details will be provided nearer the time.

## **Year 2**

### **Report**

In the second year, you will complete a short report of around 10,000 words on some aspect of your professional role. This might cover a review of systems within your authority or district, an evaluation of the training course or a review of some aspect of the professional development for teachers that you provide. You will be encouraged to start planning this in Term 1. It is important not to be too ambitious; this is a small-scale project and will be undertaken by you alongside a new and demanding professional role. You will receive support from Trainers/Coordinators at the Institute but opportunities to consult the library and your supervisor will be more limited.

If you decide not to submit a Report, you may opt to receive a Postgraduate Diploma on successful completion of all modules that comprise the first year's course.

### **Support and ongoing professional development**

During the second year you will also receive three visits from National Trainer/Coordinators to support you in your work as a Teacher Leader in your authority and you will be expected to attend professional development meetings. These support you in your Teacher Leader role and are distinct from your work for the Report, which is the final element of your Master's course.

## 2.7 Learning and teaching on the course

Although the course can be described in the separate modules set out in section 3, the nature of the course is organic and interplay between practice and theory is essential. Work for one module will often overlap with that for others and although Literacy Development and Research Methods in Literacy may seem more distinct in the way that they are presented, you should not keep them in watertight mental compartments; they should inform and relate to the work you are doing on the leading of teachers and the teaching of children.

When you are not teaching children or attending sessions at the Institute you will find that your time is fully occupied with reading and preparing work for the course. **You should ensure that you have no other commitments during your year of full-time study.**

## 2.8 Lesson Observation

The Institute has a one-way viewing screen. This is where you and invited teachers will teach children for analysis by the group. There are Reading Recovery levelled books that may be borrowed if necessary.

## 2.9 Course outline

Assessments in italics are ungraded but must be satisfactorily completed

## Appendix Three: Live Lesson Critique

DIAGRAM REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



### *Facility provision for the live-lesson critique*

The ‘live-lesson critique’ uses a one-way mirror, with a room on each side. On the smaller side, the room is set up as a small classroom, with a desk, chairs for a child and teacher, a large magnetic whiteboard and a variety of resources, including magnetic letters and the child’s reading and writing materials. On the larger side, the Trainer and the Teacher Leader-training group are placed to observe the lesson without being seen or heard by the teacher and child. The teacher may be one of the training-group or an invited RR teacher. The teacher contributes to the focus for discussion by asking the group to provide guidance on possible future teaching directions for this child’s RR programme. The Trainer and Teacher Leader Trainees observers will study and discuss the lesson, shaping their observations towards insights into the child’s control over reading and writing competencies. Following the lesson, the observers may feedback their insights to the teacher and discuss theoretical grounding for observed interactions.



Providing and guiding specific feedback to the ‘performing’ teacher following the lesson adds another dimension to Teacher Leader-training, since the Trainer not only works for greater insights into the teacher-child relationship but also looks for opportunities to highlight effective sites for teacher-learning, striving to effect teacher-change.

## Appendix Four: Feedback Types Chart

Types of Feedback in the LLLD Teacher Leader Training course

Feedback type	Planned/Unplanned	Individual/Group	Summative/Formative	Oral/Written	Ongoing/Concluded
Feedback during tasks/seminars/sessions (to the group)	Planned and Unplanned	Group	Formative	Oral	Ongoing
Feedback from peers as part of informal conversations	Unplanned	Both Individual and Group	Formative	Oral	Ongoing
Feedback as individual tutorials	Planned	Individual	Summative and formative	Both written and Oral	Ongoing
Feedback to the group as part of the live lesson critique	Planned	Group	Formative	Oral	Ongoing
Feedback constructed by TLs for teachers	Planned	Individual and Group	Formative	Both Oral and written	Ongoing
Feedback from additional modules tutor (Res Meths/ Lit dev.)	Planned	Individual	Summative and formative	Written	Both ongoing and conclusive at different points in time
Feedback from peers (visit to teaching)	Planned	Individual	Formative	Written and Oral	Ongoing
Feedback to tutoring	Planned	Individual	Formative	Written and Oral	Ongoing
Feedback to teaching	Planned	Individual	Formative	Written and Oral	Ongoing
Feedback to case study reports	Planned	Individual and group	Summative and formative	Written and Oral	Both ongoing and conclusive at different points in time
Feedback to Portfolio Items	Planned	Individual and group	Summative and formative	Written and Oral	Both ongoing and conclusive at different points in time
Feedback to case study files	Planned	Individual and group	Summative and formative	Written	Both ongoing and conclusive at different points in time

Feedback to the teachers that have taught for a live lesson critique	Planned	Individual	Formative	Oral	Ongoing
Feedback to their peers that have taught for a live lesson critique	Planned	Individual	Formative	Oral	Ongoing
Feedback to the group about their feedback	Planned	Group	Formative	Oral	Ongoing

Terms:

*Formal* – pre-arranged and planned with a specific and culturally recognised process for management, i.e. a meeting, specific paper format etc.

*Informal* – occurring as part of general interaction and perhaps part of the process of scaffolded performance or a route towards higher cognition where the interaction is ‘worked on’ by the Trainer

*Concluded* – Summative in nature - whilst may have comments that can be drawn together for future work, the task that the comments relate to is ended.

*Ongoing* – Formative in nature - linked to a series of opportunities to apply the feedback

*Highlighted contexts of feedback used for study.*

## Appendix Five: Table of diversity of Teacher Leader Participants.

	Classroom teaching experience	Head Teacher	SEN management experience	Initial teacher training provider	Teacher development provider	RR teaching experience
<b>Jo</b>						
<b>Harri</b>						
<b>Kym</b>						
<b>Charlie</b>						
<b>Anne</b>						
<b>Beryl</b>						
<b>Carol</b>						
<b>Eve</b>						
<b>Frances</b>						
<b>Helen</b>						
<b>Iris</b>						
<b>Jane</b>						
<b>Klaus</b>						

## **Appendix Six: The Teacher Leader Role**

### **SECTION 5: READING RECOVERY TEACHER LEADERS (TUTORS)**

A Reading Recovery Teacher Leader (Tutor) has the primary responsibility for training teachers in Reading Recovery and maintaining the quality of Reading Recovery provision for previously trained teachers in the Authority. The Teacher Leader (TL) also works closely with a Local Authority Link Support Person in administration and implementation of the programme. Remuneration for this post should reflect the postgraduate training required and the responsibility involved.

#### ***SELECTION\* AND TRAINING OF TEACHER LEADERS (TL)***

##### ***Requirements for the selection of Teacher Leaders (TL)***

- § Evidence of ability to work at postgraduate academic level.
- § Successful teaching experience (including recent early primary experience).
- § Ability to provide professional development, showing exceptional competence in working with both colleagues and administrators.
- § Nomination by a local authority making a commitment to implement Reading Recovery.

\* A member of staff of the training course may be invited to consult or participate in the selection process.

*Requirements for training Teacher Leaders (TL)*

Training as a TL requires **full-time participation** for an academic year at an accredited Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Training Site. The major components of the training are:

- § Practical implementation of the Reading Recovery programme with children.
- § Theories of literacy and literacy acquisition and literacy difficulties.
- § Research analysis.
- § Teacher tutoring and the role of the Teacher Leader.
- § The organisation, management and delivery of the in-service training course for teachers.

*Teaching children*

- § Teach four children individually on a daily basis in a school setting.
- § Receive school visits from a Trainer.
- § Communicate with school personnel and parents of children.
- § Maintain careful records on each child and complete data returns as specified.
- § Teach one older child for one term.

*Academic coursework*

- § Attend all sessions and seminars.

- §§ Meet all requirements for TL training as prescribed by the syllabus content outline.
- §§ Teach a child for peer colleagues at a training session at least twice during the training year.
- §§ Successfully complete an oral examination.
- §§ Successfully complete all assessment requirements for the MA in Literacy Learning and Literacy Difficulties (Professional Route).

### **Field requirements**

- §§ Participate in teacher training conducted by a trained Teacher Leader; attend in-service sessions and observe Teacher Leader(s); assume responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating in-service sessions as specified by Trainer.
- §§ Conduct colleague visits to fellow Teacher Leaders-in-training.
- §§ Participate with trained Teacher Leader and/or independently conduct school visits to Reading Recovery Teachers.
- §§ Visit other Reading Recovery centres to gain an appreciation of a variety of situations.
- §§ Observe Continuing Contact sessions conducted by a trained Teacher Leader.

*Prepare for implementation*

Supported by the Trainers, the Teacher Leader trainee will work with the Education Authority Link Support Person to plan and initiate the following activities related to the implementation of Reading Recovery within the Authority:

- § communicate with appropriate personnel
- § inform appropriate groups about Reading Recovery
- § plan and provide for appropriate site preparation for teacher training (including room with one-way screen and suitable office space)
- § prepare a budget
- § order and prepare materials for teacher training
- § develop a plan for clerical support
- § assist in the identification of appropriate teachers for the in-service course.

The Teacher Leaders' first year back in their Local Education Authority is seen as an extension of their training, during which they receive an enhanced level of support and guidance from Trainers for both their tutoring role and their research report, the final requirement of their Master's Degree. Although the formal course entails one year of strenuous full time study, learning to be a skilled Reading Recovery Teacher Leader requires ongoing professional support and



development. It is important, before embarking on the course that would-be Teacher Leaders are aware of the demands of the Reading Recovery Teacher Leader's role, which they will assume once they have completed the course.

## Appendix Seven: Baseline Interview Schedule

### Telephone interview schedule

(Pseudonym). Code.....

I'm interested in investigating what sorts of feedback experiences you have had prior to coming on the Teacher Leader training course. The information given will be treated anonymously. The general ideas I discover will be shared with TLs and the course team for the future. The information is gathered for research alone and will not be used in any aspect of coursework or field experiences within this course.

By feedback I mean times when someone looked at an aspect of your work either written or practical and communicated some sort of evaluation to you – this could have been in a written or spoken form.

What kinds of feedback have you experienced before  
(*prompts*: written tasks?? Practice based feedback? Specifically in RR?)  
Tell me about.....

- In school
  - As a student
  - As a teacher
  -
- How did it make you feel?

Was it useful?  
In what ways?  
Did it make you rethink your approach to the task?  
(practical activity?)

What did the useful feedback allow you to do?

Have you given feedback to other adults/teachers?  
(*Prompts*: Who? As teachers? Colleague feedback in RR)

What did you learn from the experience of ( did you yourself get anything from ?)

- Giving feedback?
- Receiving feedback?

Do you think feedback is important?

(Why/Why not?)

Would you like to ask me anything about this interview or what I will do with the information or to make a comment?

## Appendix Eight: Using ideas from previous interviews

### Interview schedule –April 2005

TDM was probably your first experience at PD experience for TLs - Can we talk a bit about that first

What did you think?

*(probes -- relationships with other TLs? Community? Role of Trainer?)*

You've just had feedback on your first go at giving feedback to a teacher in Reading Recovery, as a Teacher leader

Tell me about it.

*Using own experiences? Reflecting on what? Feelings of the teacher?*

*Timeliness? Purpose of feedback*

What sorts of things did you think about as you constructed the feedback?

*(taking on the role of Trainer?)*

Why those things in particular?

Feedback on feedback is an unusual context – did it differ from other sorts of feedback?

*Feelings? Goals? Trainer voice?*

More generally now

When you get a piece of feedback – what do you do first?

Does it affect your confidence levels? Probe: always?)

*TLT had evidence of feeling challenged by feedback and unsure - has this changed? In all contexts?*

(probe)Are you thinking of written feedback or oral feedback here?

Do you ever go back to it, the written feedback, say now after a few weeks/months?

Thinking about written feedback now, does how you use it and feel about it change as you return to it?

Do you think feedback is contributing to your learning?

How?

*Different and changing role of feedback?*

Probe: Is it different for teaching/tutoring activity?

## Appendix Nine: Loops of Data Collection

DIAGRAM REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



## Appendix Ten: Example of Grounded Theory Methods – The development of a concept

Example of early coding with N'Vivo

<p><b>Tina/Written Feedback/YCS/Nov</b>          You have <u>done an excellent job of beginning</u> to source a case study. <u>You have included a range of information about Aaron leading to his inclusion in Reading Recovery.</u> Well done!</p> <p>I have put post-its at certain points in the file, and these together with the following comments are intended to add to the development of the file.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· You have clearly labelled your file contents and divided it into sections. <u>This is very helpful to the reader.</u> The list on pages 46-47 of Module Handbook will help you check that have included all suggested file components.</li> <li>· <u>At the moment, your weekly reflections review development over the previous week. They are focused almost entirely on what Aaron did. Try to shift the focus to what you tried and how Aaron responded to this, i.e. a focus on the impact of your teaching and its match to Aaron's learning needs.</u> I have drawn attention to some possible areas for inclusion in this type of reflection on some of the post-its.</li> <li>· <u>You will need to start a (back) section for feedback you receive on the file.</u> Post-it notes can be left in place</li> </ul>	<p><b>Memo</b>  <i>Seems to praise something, but directed towards the activity and its goal.          Seems to occur at higher levels in later documents.</i></p> <p><i>Rationale for why it works</i></p> <p><i>Reflect back what it is like – clear that it is not yet ready for the goal.</i></p> <p>Information to close the gap follows identifying the actual performance</p> <p>Tells what to do – very practical and immediate – not conceptual</p>	<p>Acknowledge</p> <p>Mimicking</p> <p>Developing</p>
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<p>alongside the up-dated actions that respond to the point raised for the next hand-in. <u>In later development phases of the file</u>, you could have some pages dedicated to these early 'post-its' maybe grouped under hand-in or topic dealt with.</p> <p>· <u>Your lesson record contained in this file has attempted to capture many details about how Aaron worked across the lesson components.</u> Well done! <u>It would be good to work towards recording information about what you did and its effect on Aaron's learning.</u> This aspect will no doubt develop on as you <u>reflect more on the process of making effective lesson records.</u></p>	<p><i>For the future</i></p> <p><i>States what it does – why would it do that? Is it assumed that the TL doesn't know? Unless it somehow has a purpose</i></p> <p><i>What it is to become – not feed back to the present but to the future – seems to have 2 qualities, one to activity but one to more 'community' based aspirations.</i></p>	
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### **Arriving at core-categories and a series of interrelationships – early development**

After all the transcribing, the data was analysed for the ways in which TL Trainees and Trainers were making meaning of the feedback tool. The extract above shows early coding process on a feedback document. The same process was used with all the data types, but written feedback is used as an example. Initially, each data type was coded separately. This was because the data types were examples of different ways of feedback working and early coding was at the level of the context. To exemplar the process, I will describe how I got to one category, 'Acknowledging' that became important across the data types. The literature critiques in Chapter Two makes it quite clear that ways of motivating are likely to be important both to writer and recipient of feedback. I began by

giving an early code of praise to examples of talk or written feedback that seemed to be praising the TL trainee. However, as I continued coding throughout the data, I had to add qualifiers to my code that communicated the idea of ‘praise’ more deeply. It wasn’t praise without qualification – it was always linked to an aspect of behaviour, thinking or task. In other words not empty praise. It became clear that the word ‘praise’ didn’t sufficiently communicate the intent of the feedback comments. The idea for the overall category came from a Teacher Leader trainee interview. She was talking about how when she had to act as the feedback she wanted to acknowledge the teacher’s effort. This became the overall grouping for the aspects of praise. I then was able to trace development of how the learner was acknowledged across the year. . Dialogue or threads of dialogue that seemed to be working toward the same goal were grouped together, with descriptions and memos assigning interrelationships. I was able to move to some models of what feedback intentions appeared with what other categories, and to develop a description of a developing but constant use of acknowledging (see Chapter Five).

The real insights from Grounded theory came from using N’Vivo to move between documents and types of feedback quickly and to maintain a visual model of grouping and layering on the computer screen as I worked. In this way, negative case analyses were easier to achieve than by ‘paper-coding’ alone. The relationships weren’t obviously and visibly not working. However, the software doesn’t make the relationships for you. I learned a great deal about the importance of the way the data is put in, labelled and saved initially. It’s all too easy to be restricted by the labelling. I found that when I was able to move away



from low level descriptive coding, I was able to move across data types, finding more important and 'overall' ways of seeing how feedback worked.

## **Appendix Eleven: Pseudonyms**

### **Teacher Leader Trainees**

Harri  
Charlie  
Jo  
Kym

### **Experienced Teacher Leaders**

Anne  
Beryl  
Carol  
Eve  
Frances  
Helen  
Iris  
Jane  
Klaus

### **Trainers**

Tess  
Tracy  
Tilly  
Tina

## **Appendix Twelve: Details of TL trainee Case study Assessment Task**

(taken from the Reading Recovery Module Handbook)

### **10. ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES**

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MMALLD\_01

(90 credits)

#### **10.1 Element 1: Case Study, Procedures and Reports**

Work on this element of module 1 includes two in-depth case studies of children experiencing difficulties in learning literacy. In the Autumn term you will begin the study of one of your Reading Recovery children, assessing and teaching them and evaluate the intervention for that child. During the Spring term you will also study an older child, using a range of assessment techniques. At the end of each case study you will need to reassess the child (and also provide a follow-up assessment at the end of the year if appropriate for the Reading Recovery child).

Reports for different audiences are written as part of each case study.

#### **Case study files**

You will need to set up a file for each case study with all case history notes, samples of work, assessment records, summaries and reports. The Reading Recovery case study will also include teaching records and evaluations of teaching and learning.

Although many of these records are working notes, and are respected as such, you should bear in mind that these files will be handed to the external examiner, and so they should be well organised with all pages fixed securely. These two files,

when complete, form the submission for assessment and are examined for accreditation.

## **Case Study Procedures**

### **Reading Recovery Case Study**

The Reading Recovery case study provides you with an opportunity to study and reflect on your teaching in Reading Recovery and on the progress of a child who finds literacy learning a challenge. In consultation with the course team select one of the four children whom you teach daily in Reading Recovery as your case study.

Establish the teaching file in the same way as for all your children in Reading Recovery including;

- initial and final (and possibly follow-up) assessment and summaries
- daily and cumulative records of reading and writing
- daily comments and weekly reflections on progress, and on the impact of your teaching decisions.

In addition also include:

- some samples of work from Roaming Around the Known and from lessons, dated and annotated with the insights about teaching and learning which they demonstrate

- a brief section of background information about the school context, the child's progress prior to Reading Recovery and any other input from family, teachers, school records etc.
- the file will also need a section at the back to keep feedback from the course team and colleagues
- the three Reports written for different audiences are included in a section at the front of the file (see section below).

Use labelled file dividers and a contents page to organise the file for final hand in.

Do not use polysleeves except for loose inclusions e.g. hand-made books etc as they add considerably to the weight of the file, which you will have to carry several times.

The file is an assessed piece of work, but more importantly it is a developmental study. In order to support both the teaching and reporting of the case study, you will be asked to hand in your file on several occasions (see each case study guidance section), so that written guidance may be given on a regular basis.

Whilst we shall make every endeavour to return files as quickly as possible it is **imperative that you keep copies of any documents needed to inform your teaching when you hand in the file!**

### **Reading Recovery Case Study File Hand In**

1. Friday 20 October returned 03 November 2006
2. 24 May 2007 (with draft reports) returned Thursday 14 June 2007

## **Final hand-in complete with reports 17 July 2007**

### **Reading Recovery Case Study Reports**

Three reports are written for the Reading Recovery case study and, on final submission, are included in a labelled section at the front of the case study file. A draft of each report is submitted for formative feedback (see dates above). Final submission of reports should be in duplicate.

Information to be included in the reports, written for different audiences:

#### **Part I**

A research report for a journal and an academic reader (2.500 words approx.)

(Refer to section 5.6 in the LLLD Course Handbook)

- Abstract
- Context of **intervention** in early literacy research and literature
- Case details (age, dates, the school and family context, and sources of information, respecting the privacy of the child) including statement of how the child was identified for Reading Recovery
- Assessments: brief description of assessments used and rationales for choice, summary of early and later assessment results,
  - explaining these in words

- using at least one clear table and one clear graph inserted in the text
- Brief description of the intervention design and delivery
- Analysis of the child's reading and writing processing at different points in time, showing changes in strategic activity used and illustrated with evidence from teaching records
- Conclusions with explanations and recommendations
- References

## **Part II**

A concise report that will be of use to either the Headteacher, the Language co-ordinator, the SENCO or the class teacher. (500 words max)

Specify your audience and reflect this in your writing.

Include:

- the child's initial and final status with a simple table or graph inserted in the text (this is likely to be different from the table or graph in Report 1)
- a current analysis of the child's strategies written for teachers who may not know much about strategic activity in literacy
- a brief summary of the teaching intervention leading into...
- ...conclusions and recommendations.

### **Part III**

A report written for yourself and your Trainers (1000 words approx.)

This report is a reflection of change over time in what you have learned **about your own teaching and its impact on children's learning** from reflecting on the work on the case study. Include specific examples from your lesson record comments and weekly reviews to illustrate the points you are making about your teaching insights. Draw upon literature on teacher development and professional learning. A reference section is included at the end.

See also page 56: Submission of case studies

### **Older Case Study**

As an intervention for children with difficulties learning literacy, Reading Recovery is targeted at a very specific point in the child's learning – around the age of 6, after one year of formal literacy learning. It is important for us to understand the significance of that brief window of opportunity which Reading Recovery is designed to exploit and the older case study provides an opportunity for close observation and in-depth analysis of the literacy profile of a child for whom that particular window is closed.

The purpose of the study is:



- to make a detailed study of an older child's literacy processing and literacy difficulties
- to use and evaluate a range of tools for observing and assessing literacy skills
- to explore the effect of some years of failure in literacy learning, both on the child's processing in reading and writing and his/her attitudes to reading and writing
- to consider how support for an older failing reader might differ from an early intervention such as Reading Recovery
- to explore the problems associated with persistent literacy difficulties.